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## ABSTRACT

This study examines the characteristics and needs of Michigan's migrant and seasonal farmworkers. The study was based on census data, state agency records, and a statewide survey of service providers. Results indicate that neither mechanization nor other structural changes in Michigan's agricultural economy have diminished the industry's dependence on seasonal labor, which contributes significantly to the \$15.5 billion generated annually by Michigan agriculture. In addition, the short-term influx of migrant workers has resulted in increased local spending and the creation of employment opportunities for service workers in programs developed for this population. Michigan's migrant farm labor force currently includes between 40,000 and 48,000 workers and their families, most of Mexican origin. The average workers' salary of \$4.35 per hour (1987) has required the creation of a reliable system of social supports including child care, job training, legal services, and health care. Fifty-three of the 84 surveyed service providers provide services specifically for migrant and seasonal farmworkers. According to these service providers, the four major problem areas for migrant farmworkers and their families are housing, health, education, and employment. In addition, service providers cited several problems hindering their ability to deliver services, including inaccessibility of services, lack of funding, language and cultural differences, shortages of staff, and insensitivity of providers to farmworkers and their needs. Service providers' recommendations for improving service delivery to migrant and seasonal farmworkers are outlined. Contains 100 references, data tables, figures, and the survey questionnaire. (LP)

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**MIGRANT AND SEASONAL WORKERS  
IN MICHIGAN'S AGRICULTURE:  
A Study of Their Contributions,  
Characteristics, Needs, and Services**

**Dr. Refugio I. Rochin  
Dr. Anne M. Santiago  
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**Research Report No. 1  
November 1989**

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Finally, we would like to thank all those participants in this study who generously consented to be interviewed and whose knowledge provided the main foundation of this work. Unfortunately, space does not permit us to cite them individually. We are very grateful to them, nevertheless.

# MIGRANT AND SEASONAL FARMWORKERS IN MICHIGAN

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# **MIGRANT AND SEASONAL WORKERS IN MICHIGAN'S AGRICULTURE**

## **CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY**

### **Overview**

Michigan's food and fiber system constitutes the second most important industry in the state. More than one in five state jobs stems from agriculture. A critical part of Michigan's farming economy is the availability, timeliness, and professional skills of migrant and seasonal workers. According to a USDA report, Michigan is the fifth most agriculturally dependent state on farm workers in the United States (Schluter & Edmondson, 1986).

Migrant and seasonal farm workers have a history of many problems -- uncertain jobs and problematic transportation; mistreatment on farms and in communities; too little money to support them between jobs; inadequate housing; poor health; and too little schooling. These problems are especially acute for migrants who rely on farm work as their principal employment, not the part-timers who work on farms during vacation from school.

### **Objectives of This Report**

This study documents the current situation facing Michigan's migrant and seasonal farm workers, many of whom are Hispanics who travel over 4,000 miles each year for seasonal employment. Information for this study comes from secondary sources (e.g., other reports and census data) and from respondents to our statewide survey of service providers. Several products emerged from this study: a directory of service agencies and descriptions of their programs; estimates of farm worker numbers; a prioritization of farm worker needs; an assessment of the issues facing service providers; and an agenda for further research. Most importantly, the report provides an up-to-date analysis of the demand for and supply of migrant and seasonal farm workers in Michigan. The uniqueness of Michigan's farm structure and production of labor-intensive crops is also highlighted. Moreover, we review the history to demonstrate how many farm labor features have remained unchanged in Michigan during the past 25 years. Finally, our study examines farm worker needs as reported by a majority of Michigan's service providers.

### **Related Issues**

Government policy has, and is influencing the evolution of Michigan's farm labor market. Issues relevant today are expected to change socioeconomic conditions in the near future. The Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986 (IRCA) will affect the national supply of farm workers. Policies on collective bargaining will influence the relations and responsibilities of workers and employers. Regulatory decisions will help to determine minimum wages and working conditions. Farm workers and service programs will alter the cost and availability of housing, the options available to farm worker children, and the health and job opportunities for adults. The scope and impact of these influences are not a direct part of this study. However, knowing more about the current situation of migrant and seasonal farm workers will certainly add to the ability of policy makers to make decisions for a better tomorrow.

### **A Short History of Farm Workers in Michigan<sup>1</sup>**

Michigan's history of migrant and seasonal farm workers cannot be told without reference to the importance of these workers to the United States in general. Originally, migrant workers were largely recruited by farmers from nearby towns and states in the early 1900s for perishable crops, including fruits and vegetables. Although attempts to mechanize agriculture were frequent, large reservoirs of farm labor from the southern states, Mexico, and other developing countries made migrant labor the less expensive alternative for farm production in many parts of the United States.

World War II placed great pressure on domestic labor supplies. In response, the Emergency Farm Labor Program was put into operation on a national scale in 1943 to organize the recruitment of foreign labor. Following World War II, a special agreement with Mexico gave rise to the Bracero Program which operated from 1951 to 1964. This program allowed Mexicans to work in crews on federally qualified farms in need of specialized seasonal workers. Although most of the Braceros worked in California's perishable crops, there followed increasing numbers of Mexicans in search of farm work elsewhere in the United States. Attempts to organize farm workers in California were thwarted by the influx of Mexican labor. A drive by labor organizers in the 1960s, and in particular, the efforts of Dr. Ernesto Galarza (Galarza, *Merchants of Labor*, 1964), led to the termination of the Bracero Program by the mid-1960s. Later farm worker organizing by Cesar Chavez and Dolores Huerta led to a landmark labor law in 1975 in California, which introduced the possibility for migrant and seasonal farm workers to engage successfully in collective bargaining.

The demise of the Bracero Program at the close of 1964 did not stop the inflow of Mexican workers to U.S. farms. Most had no job alternatives to turn to in Mexico and many maintained contacts for continued employment in the United States. With the growing number of Mexican workers in search of U.S. farm jobs, many organized into crews of traveling workers. Initially traveling with contractors (coyotes) and later as independent families in search of work, Mexican migrants found their way to the Midwest. Their numbers swelled with repeated visits during the early 1960s.

Michigan farmers began using seasonal workers before 1900. Most of these workers were of European extraction and were recruited from the low-income areas of several Midwestern cities. The use of these workers was tied to the expansion of sugar-beet, fruit, and vegetable production. Many of these early workers, unlike their present day counterparts, eventually found the opportunity to buy their own farms, settle out of the migrant stream, and become residents of local communities. Unfortunately, this early history is not well documented.

In the 1930s, farmers in Western Michigan became important employers of migrant workers for strawberries and "stretch crops" like cherries, peaches, and apples. Berrien County growers went to Arkansas and south Texas to recruit seasonal workers. The Arkansas workers were mostly white and black. The Texas workers were almost exclusively of Mexican descent and referred to as Tejanos. According to Valdes (1990):

The Tejanos who became sugar beet workers (*betabeleros*) originated in South and South-Central Texas. The Tejanos were not only citizens born in the state, they had well developed social, economic, and cultural networks and family ties in the region. Furthermore, unlike the earlier generation from Mexico, they did not look back to Mexico.(p.114)

Although the Great Depression dampened some of the demand for southern workers in Michigan by 1940, more than 60,000 workers entered the midwest annually to work in agriculture. A majority of them were employed in Michigan. The pattern of employment for the seasonal workers is described by Valdes (1990) as follows:

After the cherries (in Michigan), workers from the two branches of the migrant stream went southward. Many of the fruit migrants returned to Southwestern Michigan. Commercial blueberry production, which was expanding very rapidly (in the 1940s), provided them employment beginning in early August. Later in the month, peaches pears, grapes, tomatoes, melons, apples, and other crops were added to the list. Late summer and early fall in Southwestern Michigan represented a harvest peak that required even more workers than in June.

World War II not only increased the demand for migrant and seasonal workers, it supported the wide-scale entry of corporate canneries in the Midwest; e.g. Green Giant, Libby's, Campbell Soup, Del Monte, Heinz, and Stokely Food. The canneries processed fruits and vegetables that spearheaded the formation of government agencies and private associations to help with the recruitment of labor during the war. Thus, in the 1940s, corporate agricultural interests created new labor mechanisms for organizing workers and new associations for dealing with workers.

The 1950s were noted for federal government attempts to deal with high national unemployment through Operation Bootstrap. The program was aimed at providing tax incentives for industries to generate jobs. Operation Bootstrap also meant the increased crackdown against illegal aliens, more precisely Mexican aliens in the United States. In this period, Puerto Ricans were brought into Michigan and the Midwest as possible replacements for Mexican workers agricultural workers.

Puerto Rico had 700,000 able workers, a majority with agricultural experience. To employ Puerto Ricans, Operation Farmlift was put into effect. The plan was to fly in Puerto Ricans to work in the sugar beet industry, especially in the Saginaw Valley and the Thumb Area of Michigan. According to Valdes, this plan met with a series of disasters: first, a plane crash killing 28 workers (37 actually survived the crash); second, a demand for larger, more expensive, commercial planes to fly the workers; third, complaints about living conditions on farms; fourth, admittedly poor housing; and fifth, "bitter cold" weather, poor pay, etc. In brief, Operation Farmlift was a fiasco of "broken promises." Its demise was especially quickened by bad publicity. Despite the short life of Operation Farmlift, Valdes (1990) notes that:

A more lasting outcome of Operation Farmlift was that it resulted in the formation of a permanent Puerto Rican community in Detroit. More than 400 of the men who walked out of the beet fields and went to Detroit in 1950 remained in the city. They kept the jobs in which they were first placed or they found better ones. Soon they began to send for their families, and a network of migration developed between the island and Detroit.(pp.275-276)

It is difficult to imagine what Michigan's agriculture would be like today without the stream of Mexican migrant workers which gained prominence in the 1960s. What started in this decade was a regular, reliable migration of workers from northeastern Mexico and southern Texas to Michigan. Many were Texas-born, Mexican-origin workers. An uncounted, or more precisely, uncountable, number were undocumented aliens who sought work far from the U.S.-Mexico border and in relative safety from the U.S. Border Patrol.

Employment of these workers reached their peak in 1964 when approximately 80,000 migrants arrived (1964 *Michigan Agricultural Statistics*). Concern spread throughout Michigan of a decrease in the supply of farm labor, brought about by the demise of the Bracero Program. At the end of the 1960s, it was thought that:

Without mechanization, fruit and vegetable growers may have labor costs that are well over 50 percent of their total production cost--labor being the most expensive single input in the fruit and vegetable grower's operation. Without mechanization the grower must depend to a large extent upon seasonal workers, many who only enter the seasonal work pool for a few weeks or months.(Cargill, *et al*, 1969, p.4)

Be that as it may, the demand for seasonal farm workers was met by a strong continuing flow of domestic migrant (and some undocumented) workers in the 1970s. Some mechanization occurred in the 1970s, but the growth in production of labor-intensive fruits and vegetables maintained the demand for workers. Health and lifestyle considerations also weighed heavily in consumer tastes, leading to an increasing demand for these products. Thus, the derived demand for labor continued, despite the signs of increasing mechanization. Though the patterns of farm production in the seventies and eighties might show some signs of a decreasing demand for migrant and seasonal labor, these workers remain critical to Michigan's agriculture in certain areas; especially in regions with heavy fruit and vegetable production.

### Summary

- Migrant and seasonal workers have been employed in Michigan agriculture since the turn of the century.
- The history shows a functional and necessary relationship between migrant workers and Michigan producers of fruits and vegetables.
- Farm mechanization has not removed the demand and need for migrant and seasonal workers in Michigan.
- Migrants continue to follow a pattern of traveling long distances for employment, many traveling up to 4,000 miles from Texas to work on Michigan farms.
- New policies and measures at the federal and state levels will shape the future of farm-labor relations, farm worker employment, and farm worker problems.
- The time is right for an up-to-date report on the demand for and supply of farm labor.
- Labor intensive fruit and vegetable production continues to be a growing and prosperous sector of Michigan agriculture.

- The time is right for an up-to-date report on the demand for and supply of farm labor.
- Labor intensive fruit and vegetable production continues to be a growing and prosperous sector of Michigan agriculture.

1. The best reference on Michigan's history of Hispanic farm labor is the forthcoming book by Dr. Dennis Nodin Valdes: *Al Norte: Agricultural Workers in the Great Lakes Region, 1917-1970*, The University of Texas Press, Austin. We are indebted to Dr. Valdes for providing us with a pre publication copy.

## CHAPTER II

### MICHIGAN AGRICULTURE AND ITS WORKERS

#### Farms and Food Production

Agriculture is Michigan's second leading industry, contributing approximately \$15.5 billion annually to the state's economy. Michigan ranks number one in the nation for production of the following agricultural commodities: dry beans, black turtle beans, cranberry beans, navy beans, cucumbers for pickles, tart cherries, and potted geraniums. The state ranks second in the nation in the diversity of all products grown. This diversity results from Michigan's unique geographic location, affording an abundant supply of fresh water and varied soils.

The 1982 Census of Agriculture estimated that 58,661 farms were operating in Michigan; 10.9 million acres of land were devoted to farming; and the average farm size in Michigan was 187 acres. The Census defines a farm as any place from which \$1,000 or more of agricultural products were sold or normally would have been sold during the year. However, while the average farm has grown in acres, both the number of farms and acreage in farms have declined since 1982, by 12.8 and 5.7 percent, respectively. Thus, current macroeconomic indicators of increasing participation of large corporations and takeovers and decreased participation of other small farms is reflected within the agricultural sector. In 1987, by contrast, there were 51,172 farms over 10.3 million acres with an average farm size of 202 acres.

Michigan farms are changing significantly in other ways:

1. The number of smaller farms less than 179 acres has decreased by nearly 15 percent from 40,350 in 1982 to 34,819 in 1987.
2. The number of farms between 180 and 499 acres in size has decreased by nearly 16 percent from 113,539 in 1982 to 11,329 in 1987.
3. The number of farms from 500 to 999 acres has remained fairly constant, with 3,673 in 1982 and 3,667 in 1987.
4. The number of farms of 1,000 acres and more has increased by about 21 percent from 1,100 in 1982 to 1,357 in 1987.
5. The average value of agricultural products sold by all farms has increased by 12.7 percent, from \$44,123 per farm in 1982 to \$49,736 in 1987.
6. The number of individual family (sole proprietorship) farms decreased by 13.2 percent, from 52,022 in 1982 to 45,166 in 1987.



7. The number of corporate farms increased by 23.2 percent, from 947 in 1982 to 1167 in 1987.
8. The number of farm operators who listed their principal occupation as farming decreased by 13.3 percent between 1982 and 1987, from 30,107 in 1982 to 26,112 in 1987. Moreover, the average age of farm operators increased to 50.9 in 1987 from 49.5 in 1982.

The most important trend occurring in Michigan agriculture is the one involving labor intensive farm products. In particular, crops that increased the most in terms of market value between 1982 and 1987 include:

- a. **Vegetables, sweet corn, and melons**, +18.5 percent, from \$115 million in 1982 to \$136 million in 1987.
- b. **Nursery and greenhouse crops**, +54.6 percent, from \$140 million in 1982 to \$215 million in 1987.

Structural changes such as these alter the state's demand for farm labor. With a decrease in sole proprietorship farms, an increase in average farm size, and a growth in labor-intensive crops, the overall demand for farm workers can be expected to change accordingly. With the trend towards more labor intensive crops, a concurrent trend is towards more migrant and seasonal workers.

### Farm Workers

It has been estimated that one farm worker produces an average of 107,000 pounds of food, equalling 53 tons of finished products each year. This same farm worker creates jobs for more than five nonfarm people who process, transport, and merchandise the crops as well as produce items farmers need (*1988 Michigan Food and Fiber Facts*). By this measure, nearly 25 percent of America's total labor force is involved directly in the food industry.

Agricultural-related jobs are very important in Michigan. Schluter and Edmondson (1986), have found that Michigan ranks ninth in the nation in terms of the total number of workers employed in the food and fiber system. The states ranked higher in terms of agricultural employment are (in descending order): California, New York, Texas, Pennsylvania, Illinois, Ohio, Florida, and North Carolina. In terms of the number of hired farm workers, Michigan ranks fifth in the nation, following California, Texas, North Carolina, and Minnesota.

The people who work on farms are usually divided into three groups: farm operators, unpaid workers, and hired workers. A fourth group for contract labor is sometimes added to distinguish crews of workers contracted on a farm. Farm operators are those individuals who work for a share of the profits or a share of the crop and not for agreed-upon wages. Farm operators can be sharecroppers who are often former hired farm

workers. When a hired worker becomes a sharecropper, he or she no longer gets the benefits and services afforded to migrant and seasonal farm workers. Unpaid workers are usually family members related to the farm operator. They indirectly benefit from farm profits but are not paid cash wages. Hired farm workers are all persons who work for wages or a salary on a farm. For most reporting agencies, the minimum time that must be worked for wages is one hour. Thus, all persons who had any paid farm employment during the year are considered to be hired farm workers. Of the hired farm workers, distinctions are made for migrant, regular, and seasonal workers. A migrant worker is one who crosses county lines and stays away from home overnight to do farm work for wages. A seasonal worker is a local resident who does farm work during the peak period of farm production. A regular worker performs 150 or more days of work as a hired farm worker.

### **Trends in Farm Employment**

Not all farms employ hired labor. As indicated in Table 2.1, 18,134 Michigan farms (out of 51,172) employed hired farm labor and 4,652 farms employed contract labor in 1987. However, the number of farms contracting labor has almost doubled since 1982 (from 2,510 to 4,652), while the number of farms employing hired labor has decreased by about 17 percent or by 3,340.

**TABLE 2.1**  
**MICHIGAN FARMS AND LABOR EXPENSES 1982-1987**

	1982	1987	Change from 1982-1987	%Change
<i>Number of Farms</i>				
Total Farms	24,074	22,786	-1,228	-5.4
Farms with Hired Labor	21,564	18,134	-3,340	-15.5
Farms with Contract Labor	2,510	4,652	+2,142	+85.3
<i>Expenses(in \$1,000)</i>				
Total Expenses	200,757	270,178	+69,421	+34.6
Hired Labor Expenses	186,312	242,445	+56,133	+30.1
Contract Labor Expenses	14,445	27,733	+13,288	+92.0

Source: 1987 Census of Agriculture

Although the number of farms employing hired labor decreased in the decade, the expenses for both hired and contract labor have increased by nearly \$70 million between 1982 and 1987 (see Table 2.1). Michigan farmers spent a total of \$270 million for hired and farm labor in 1987, compared to \$200 million in 1982.

Table 2.2 shows that farm production expenses for hired farm labor increased by 30.1 percent, the highest growth among all production expenses. Also, hired farm labor ranked second in production expenses in 1987, up from fourth place in 1982. The impact and importance of farm workers in Michigan is substantial, they are getting an increasing share of all farm expenses. However, farm workers are vital to the lifeblood of food and fiber production and generators of local spending in the economy. What farmers pay for hired labor is converted into other jobs and earnings in Michigan.

**TABLE 2.2**  
**MICHIGAN: SELECTED FARM PRODUCTION EXPENSES, 1982/1987**

(In \$1,000s)

Item	1987		1982		%Change
	Expenses	Rank	Expenses	Rank	
Feed for Livestock and Poultry	273,192	1	254,964	2	7.1
Hired Farm Labor	242,445	2	186,312	4	30.1
Interest Expense	197,966	3	273,637	1	-27.7
Commercial Fertilizer	194,526	4	242,091	3	-19.6
Livestock and Poultry Purchased	190,386	5	170,034	5	12.0
Petroleum Products	120,621	6	181,320	6	-33.5
Agricultural Chemicals	119,933	7	114,159	7	5.1
Total	2,211,823	(NA)	1,422,517	(NA)	+55.0

Source: *1987 Census of Agriculture*

#### Patterns of Employment By Farm Size

Both hired farm and contract labor are employed in different amounts on different sized farms in Michigan. Farm labor is also concentrated in certain production areas. Table 2.3 compares farms which had either low (<\$10,000) or high (>\$10,000) expenses for labor in 1987 and 1982 and according to the approximate amount spent on both hired and contract labor.

TABLE 2.3

## NUMBER OF MICHIGAN FARMS WITH LOW OR HIGH EXPENSES FOR LABOR, 1982-1987

Farms with Expenses of:	Farms With Hired Farm Labor		Farms With Contract Labor		Total Farms Hiring Labor	
	1987	1982	1987	1982	1987	1982
\$1 to \$9,999	13,760	17,747	4,115	2,226	17,875	19,973
\$10,000 or more	4,444	3,817	537	284	4,981	4,101
Total	18,204	21,564	4,652	2,520	22,856	24,074

Source: 1987 Census of Agriculture

The overwhelming majority of Michigan's farms spent less than \$10,000 for both hired and contract labor in 1987 and 1982. However, there has been an increase in the number of farms spending more than \$10,000 annually for hired farm labor, i.e., from 3,817 farms in 1982 to 4,444 farms in 1987. Evidently, the demand for hired farm labor is growing on larger farms, which spend more than \$10,000 a year for workers. If we go back further in the Census reports to 1978, we find that no farms in Michigan spent \$10,000 or more for hired farm labor. On the other hand, 244 farms spent \$10,000 or more for contract labor in 1978 and the number has continued to increase to 537 in 1987. Two patterns are apparent with regard to farm employment:

1. Larger farms are growing in number and spending more for hired farm and contract labor.
2. Smaller farms are shrinking in number and spending less on hired farm labor but more for contract labor.

#### By Season

Michigan's major farm employment takes place from April through October. This means that farmworker employment levels rise and fall quickly, so that farmworkers must move from farm to farm in Michigan to increase the number of weeks of employment. Published farm labor statistics cover only the months of April, July, and October. However, the seasonal pattern of employment is clearly evident with monthly data for the

years 1985 to 1987 (see Table 2.4). Notably, for the months and years reported, Michigan's general employment pattern is as follows:

- 1.The peak month of employment for all farm workers is around July, especially for hired farm workers and unpaid family members (less than 150 days per year).
- 2.The peak month of employment for temporary workers is also around July. Approximately 50,000 more workers are employed in July than during the months of April and October.
- 3.There is no seasonal peak period of work for self-employed workers on farms, all summer months are equally important.
- 4.The peak for unpaid workers occurs in July, but the number employed in recent years has dropped sharply.

The recent trends in employment are particularly remarkable for two groups: hired farm workers and unpaid workers. Hired workers appear to be replacing unpaid workers in terms of the overall numbers needed on farms. In many cases, the temporary workers are students and local residents. But more often than not, the temporary workers are migrants to Michigan. As temporary workers at a critical point in time, they fulfill a vital link for much of Michigan's food and fiber system.

### **By Region**

Migrant workers contribute the bulk of the summer's peak period employment. An estimated 45,000 migrants (workers and dependents) are employed on Michigan farms annually (Office of Migrant Services, 1988). They are employed in varying numbers in different counties across the state. As shown in Figure 2.1, over half of the migrants in Michigan are employed in five counties: four in Western Michigan and one along Saginaw Bay. These five counties, as indicated in Table 2.5, have 22 percent of the state's farms which contract labor. From 1982 to 1987, an additional 389 farms contracted labor in these five counties. They are also the counties that produce a significant portion of Michigan's fruits and vegetables.

TABLE 2.4

**SEASONAL DEMAND FOR WORKERS ON FARMS**  
(Numbers in Thousands)

**Workers on Farms<sup>1</sup>**

**Days of Hired Farm Work**

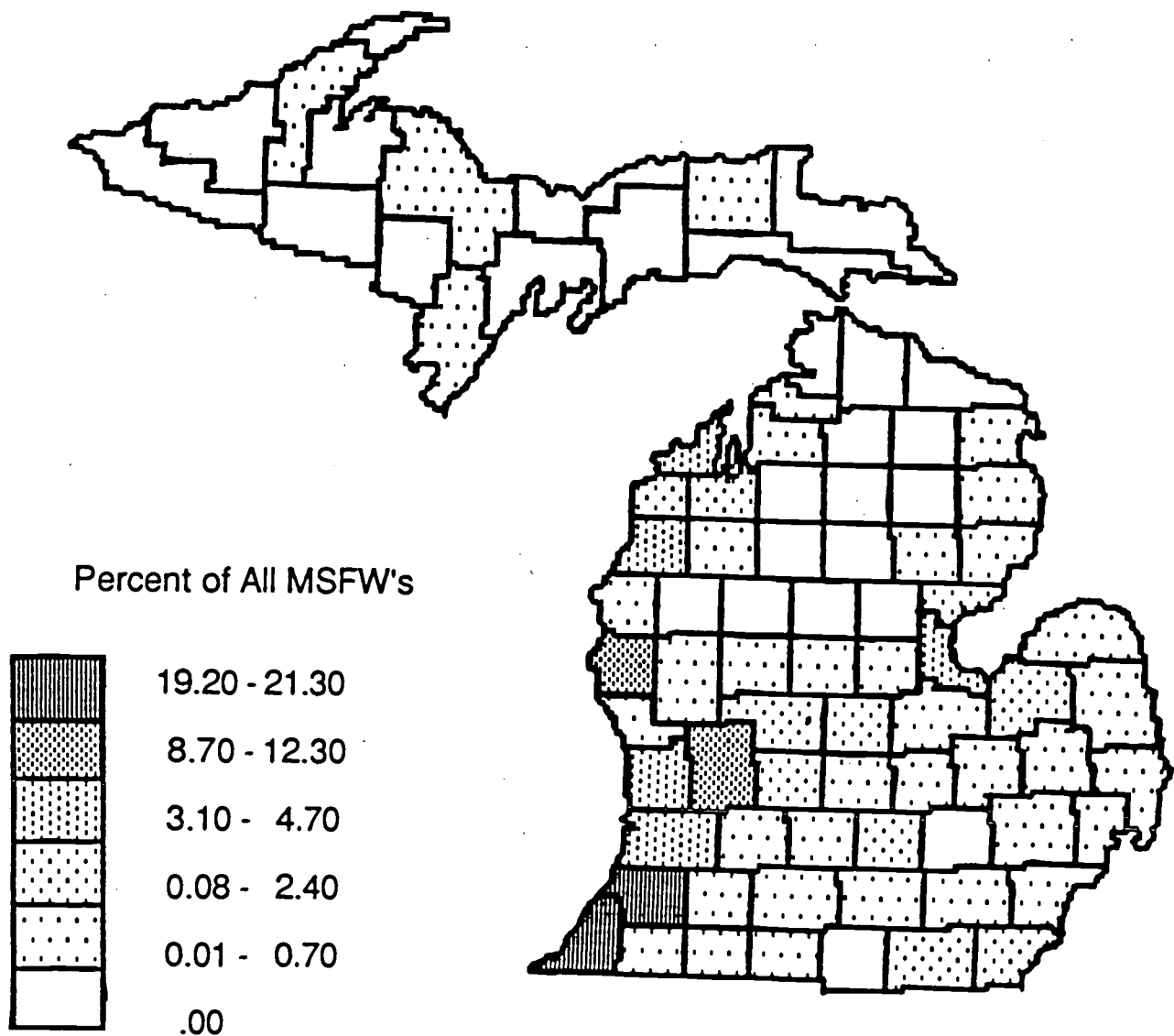
Year & Month	All Farm Workers	Self- Employed	Unpaid	Hired Workers	150 Days or More	Fewer than 150 Days
1987						
April	346	187	80	79	56	23
July	412	175	105	132	57	75
Oct.	354	172	96	86	55	31
1986						
April	333	179	76	78	60	18
July	434	177	129	128	55	73
Oct.	383	180	119	84	49	35
1985						
April	348	187	86	75	55	20
July	518	209	163	146	65	81
Oct.	415	198	118	99	53	46

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<sup>1</sup>Lake Region (Michigan, Minnesota, Wisconsin). Until 1983, the numbers for Michigan were reported separately. Since then, the numbers cover the entire Lakes region.

Figure 2.1

Distribution of Migrant Farmworkers, 1986





**TABLE 2.5**  
**MIGRANT LABOR IN LEADING COUNTIES**  
**Number of Farms with Contract Labor**

Rank	County	Number of Migrants	1987	1982	Difference
1.	Berrien	9,317	319	225	+ 94
2.	VanBuren	8,378	260	178	+ 82
3.	Kent	5,367	123	99	+ 24
4.	Oceana	3,804	174	76	+ 98
5.	Bay	<u>2,038</u>	<u>148</u>	<u>57</u>	<u>+91</u>
Totals		28,904	1,024	635	+ 389

Source: 1987 Census of Agriculture

Berrien County ranks number one in the state in the production of peaches, grapes, tomatoes, and strawberries. The county ranks second in the state in terms of the "hired farm labor expense." However, its average farm size was 121 acres in 1987, below the state average for that year. Van Buren ranks first in the state in the production of blueberries, prunes and plums, and cucumbers and pickles. It ranks second in the state in dwarf apples and asparagus. The county's average farm size was 149 acres in 1987. Kent is first in the production of apples, sunflower seed, and greenhouse vegetables. The county is third in alfalfa hay. Its average farm size was 149 acres in 1987. Oceana ranks first in the production of pears, asparagus, and forest products (Christmas trees). The average farm size was 194 acres in 1987. Bay is second in potatoes, third in sugar beets, and fourth in the state in the production of dry beans. Its average farm size was 192 acres in 1987.

#### By Crop Production

In Michigan, migrant labor is concentrated in areas producing most of the hand-harvested and processed farm products. As shown in Table 2.6, migrants work on a wide range of crops, representing \$758 million of marketed value to the state and several thousand tons of production that are processed and transported with local workers. Many of Michigan's nationally ranked commodities are very labor intensive and dependent upon seasonal and migrant workers.

TABLE 2.6

## Michigan Crops on which Migrants Work - 1987

Commodity	National Rank	Production in 1,000s	Unit	Value in 1,000s
Beans, dry edible	1	554,400	lbs	74,290
Budding Plants	1	8,000	flats	38,000
Blueberries	1	54,000	lbs	36,000
Cherries, tart	1	265,000	lbs	12,300
Cucumbers	1	308,200	lbs	20,800
Apples	2	1,050,000	lbs	90,000
Plums	2	32,000	lbs	2,000
Asparagus	3	24,000	lbs	14,000
Celery	3	114,700	lbs	13,100
Mushrooms*	3	20,200	lbs	16,800
Carrots	4	192,500	lbs	14,000
Cherries, sweet	4	64,000	lbs	18,436
Nursery Plants	4	27,055	pots	43,400
Tomatoes, Processing	4	237,000	lbs	8,200
Cauliflower	5	7,200	lbs	2,100
Grapes	5	120,000	lbs	15,609
Sugar Beets	5	2,911	tons	68,600
Cantaloupe	6	18,400	lbs	3,000
Peaches	6	60,000	lbs	9,500
Pears	6	16,000	lbs	1,884
Strawberries	6	13,200	lbs	6,226
Sod	7	-----	---	15,000
Peppers, Bell**	7	13,500	lbs	3,300
Onions	8	190,000	lbs	16,368
Lettuce	10	21,500	lbs	4,300
Bulbs, flower*	10	-----	each	200
Cabbage	11	46,400	lbs	3,000
Soybeans	12	38,150	bu	202,195
Tomatoes, fresh	13	25,200	lbs	5,116

TOTAL: \$757,724

\*1986 figures - latest available

\*\*1984 figures - latest available

Sources: Michigan Department of Agriculture (1988) *Food and Fiber Facts; Michigan Agricultural Statistics*.

### **By Type of Work per Crop**

Table 2.7 shows that migrant workers are hired for a wide range of skills and tasks, covering, for example: potting, planting, hoeing, thinning, weeding, pruning, transplanting, harvesting, packaging, transporting, and shipping. Each of these tasks requires a different set of skills, tools, work schedules, and worker mobility. The peak periods are almost all the same, the summer months. Only mushrooms are handled year round. The table also indicates a demand for workers for every crop for 1989 and no surplus of workers for any crop in 1988.

### **Wages and Earnings**

It is difficult to determine the average annual earnings for migrant and seasonal farm workers. In 1987, the average hourly wage was \$4.35. Anyone paid this wage and working 40 hours a week, would gross \$174 per week or \$696 per month. If they worked nine months a year, they would gross \$6,264 on average per annum. According to current poverty thresholds, a family of four (two adults, two children) would have to earn over \$12,000 per annum to be above the poverty line. Given that migrant and seasonal farmworkers rarely work nine months a year, it is highly likely that most join the ranks of America's poor. At this level of earnings, Michigan's migrant and seasonal farmworkers would appear to need support for housing, health, and other services in order to have an adequate standard of living.

TABLE 2.7  
DEMAND FOR MIGRANT WORKERS

Major Crops	Type of Work	Length of Season	Area of State*	Wages	Workers Needed in 1989 Y/N	Surplus Workers 1988 Y/N
Beans, dry edible	Hoeing, thinning, weeding	Early June-Mid-July	Central & E	Piece Rate	Yes	No
Soybeans	Weeding	Early June-Late August	Central, W & E	Piece Rate	Yes	No
Bedding Plants	Potting, planting, shipping	Early Mar.-Late Nov.	Central, S & W	Piece Rate	Yes	No
Bulbs	Planting, weeding, harvesting, and shipping	Early May-Late Sept.	Central & W	Piece Rate/Hourly	Yes	No
Sod	Tractor cut/roll, hand load, deliver unload, and unroll	Early May-Late Sept.	Central, S, E & W	Hourly	Yes	No
Nursery Plants	Potting, planting transplanting, and shipping	Early Mar.-Late Nov.	Central, S & W	Piece Rate/Hourly	Yes	No
Blueberries	Harvesting, packing, shipping	Mid-July-Late Aug.	S, SW, W & Central	Piece Rate	Yes	No
Cherries, tart	Harvesting	Mid-July-Mid-Aug.	S, SW, W & NW	Piece Rate	Yes	No
Cherries, sweet	Harvesting	Early Jul.-Mid-Aug.	S, SW, W & NW	Piece Rate	Yes	No

Major Crops	Type of Work	Length of Season	Area of State*	Wages	Workers Needed 1989 Y/N	Surplus Workers 1988 Y/N
Strawberries	Clean field, harvesting, packaging shipping, some planting	Early June-Late July	SW,W,NW & SE	Piece Rate	Yes	No
Apples	Harvesting, packaging, loading, and pruning	Mid-Aug.-Mid-Dec.	SW,S,W,NW,Central	Piece Rate	Yes	No
Plums	Harvesting	Mid-Aug.-Mid-Sept.	S,SW,W,NW & Central	Piece Rate	Yes	No
Peaches	Harvesting	Mid-Aug.-Mid-Sept.	S,SW,W & Central	Piece Rate	Yes	No
Pears	Harvesting	Mid-Aug.-Late Sept.	S,SW,W,NW & Central	Piece Rate	Yes	No
Cantaloupe	Transplanting, weeding, harvesting	Mid-May-Early Sept.	S,SW,W,SE & Central	Piece Rate/Hourly	Yes	No
Grapes	Pruning, harvesting	Late Aug.-Early Oct.	Central & SW	Piece Rate/Hourly	Yes	No
Tomatoes	Transplanting, hoeing, weeding, harvesting, packaging and shipping	Late May-Late Sept.	S,SE,SW,W & Central	Piece Rate/Hourly	Yes	No
Cabbage	Transplanting, weeding, harvesting packaging, shipping	Mid-May-Late Sept.	E,S,SE,SW W & Central	Piece Rate/Hourly	Yes	No

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Major Crops	Type of Work	Length of Season	Area of/ State*	Wages	Workers Needed 1989 Y/N	Surplus Workers 1988 Y/N
Lettuce	Transplanting, weeding,harvesting packaging,shipping	Mid-May- Mid-Sept.	SE,S,SW & Central	Piece Rate	Yes	No
Celery	Planting,trans- planting,weeding, top,harvest,sort, package,and ship	Early Apr.- Early Oct.	Central, SE & W	Hourly Piece Rate	Yes	No
Carrots	Thinning, weeding, hoeing, harvest, sorting, packaging and shipping	Early May- Mid-Oct.	S,W & Central	Hourly	Yes	No
Asparagus	Harvesting	Early May- Late June	SE, S SW, W & Central	Piece Rate/ Hourly	Yes	No
Cucumbers	Hoeing,thinning, weeding,training vines,harvesting	Early June -Mid-Sept.	S,SE,SW,W Central & NW	Piece Rate/ Hourly	Yes	No
Cauliflower	Transplanting, hoeing,weeding, harvesting	Mid-May- Early Nov.	E,SE,SW & Central	Piece Rate/ Hourly	Yes	No
Peppers,bell**	Transplanting,hoe- ing,weeding,harv- esting,sorting, packaging	Mid-May- Mid-Sept.	SW & Central	Piece Rate/ Hourly	Yes	No

Major Crops	Type of Work	Length of Season	Area of State*	Wages	Workers Needed 1989 Y/N	Surplus Workers 1988 Y/N
Onions	Transplanting, weeding, harvesting, sorting, bagging	Early May -Late Sept	SW, W, E & Central	Piece Rate/ Hourly	Yes	No
Sugar Beets	Thinning, weeding hoeing	Early June -Mid-Aug.	E & Central	Piece Rate/ Hourly	Yes	No
Mushrooms*	Planting, harvesting, packaging	Year round	E & Central	Piece Rate/ Hourly	Yes	No

\*=1986 figures - latest available

\*\*=1984 figures - latest available

Sources: Michigan Department of Agriculture (1988) Food and Agricultural Development Statistics. Lansing: Michigan Agricultural Statistics Service; 1988 Michigan Food and Fiber Facts; 1988 Michigan Agricultural Statistics.

**Table 2.8****Michigan Farm Workers And Wages -- July**

Year	Workers		
	Total (1,000s)	Hired (1,000s)	Wage Rate (\$ Per Hr.)
1987	412	132	4.35
1986	434	128	4.10
1985	518	146	2.78
1984	500	132	3.72
1983	114	35	4.03
1982	118	45	3.70
1981	---	---	----
1980	130	51	3.65
1979	128	48	3.33
1978	137	47	2.95
1977	135	39	2.80
1976	146	44	2.34
1975	149	44	2.30
1974	151	38	2.05
1973	153	37	2.12
1972	163	44	1.93
1971	160	38	1.85
1970	166	38	1.72
1969	171	37	1.68
1968	172	44	1.55
1967	188	44	1.39
1966	208	54	1.29
1965	219	59	1.20
1964	266	80	1.12
1963	255	73	1.12
1962	257	70	1.10
1961	269	65	1.08



Year	Total (1,000s)	Workers	
		Hired (1,000s)	Wage Rates (\$ Per Hr.)
1960	275	69	1.07
1959	278	73	1.07
1958	301	78	1.05
1957	311	85	1.06
1956	301	69	1.05
1955	327	79	1.02
1954	334	80	1.02
1953	336	75	1.01
1952	332	70	.97
1951	331	75	.92
1950	344	86	.81

\* = Estimate not available prior to 1950. Estimates for 1984 onward cover the Great Lakes Region, including Michigan, Minnesota, and Wisconsin. The data are not available for individual states.

Source: Michigan Agricultural Statistics, various years.

### Summary and Implications

- Agriculture is a major contributor to Michigan's economy; this sector generates \$15.5 billion annually and creates a multiplier effect on employment opportunities for the state's food and fiber system. Michigan farms are growing in size but shrinking in number. Fewer and fewer are family (sole proprietorship) farms operating with less than 150 acres.
- Cropping patterns are evolving with a significant increase in the production of more labor-intensive commodities like vegetables, sweet corn, melons, nursery, and greenhouse commodities.
- The farms that have employed hired labor are decreasing in number but the number of farms using contract labor is increasing.
- Farm production expenses for farm labor have increased sharply in recent years, making hired labor the second highest expense of all farms in 1987.
- Larger farms are paying an increasing share of the total expenses for hired farm labor.
- Hired farm labor is in greatest demand during the summer months and is increasingly filling jobs that went to unpaid family farm members.
- The peak demand for labor is concentrated by regions and crops. Five counties employ over half of the migrant workers. They produce major amounts of the labor-intensive farm commodities.
- Migrant workers carry out a wide range of tasks and must possess a variety of skills to work on various crops.
- The impact of migrant and seasonal labor on the state's economy is substantial. The estimated value of commodities harvested by migrant farm workers is approaching a billion dollars.
- The short-term influx of migrant workers results in increased local consumption as well as the creation of employment opportunities for service workers in programs designed to help migrant and seasonal farm workers.
- The average wage rate paid to hired farm workers reached \$4.35 per hour in 1987. Wage rates are moving upwards but not at a rapid rate when adjusted for inflation.
- The absence of a reliable support system for migrant and seasonal workers would probably jeopardize the flow and supply of workers for Michigan's farm sector. A diminished flow of workers to Michigan agriculture would have severe consequences for Michigan's economy.

## **CHAPTER III**

### **SOURCES OF FARM LABOR DATA**

#### **Introduction**

Determining the scope and magnitude of the supply of and demand for farm labor is a difficult task. Analysts need consistent definitions of the worker population as well as regular data collection activities. In the absence of such measures, analysts are left to create "guesstimates" or to generate survey instruments to collect needed information about farmworkers. In this chapter, we describe the existing sources of farm labor data at both national and state levels. We then describe the methodology utilized in conducting our survey of service providers. This survey supplemented and updated existing secondary data about the characteristics and service needs of the migrant and seasonal agricultural labor force in Michigan. It also became the principal source of information utilized in our study.

#### **Existing Data Sources at the National Level**

Despite the continued importance of migratory farm labor to U.S. agriculture, very little is known about the characteristics of this population. The national censuses of agriculture and the USDA farm labor series provide only sketchy information on migrant and seasonal workers. These data have focused on aggregate tallies and broad characteristics of this population at national and state levels with little information available for geographical areas smaller than states. The usefulness of these data for focused policy analysis and planning of services is limited. In addition, the periodic nature of the data collection and reporting process fails to capture the rapidly changing circumstances and conditions of agricultural employment in Michigan and the nation as a whole. For a more detailed discussion of these sources, see Rochin, (1978); Schlenger, *et al*, (1978/9); and Martin, (1988).

#### **Data Sources in Michigan**

In order to devise estimates of the migrant and seasonal agricultural labor force in Michigan, an extensive bibliographic search was undertaken utilizing computerized databases, the State Library of Michigan, and a survey of agencies regarding their data collection procedures. Within the State of Michigan, a number of governmental and nongovernmental entities collect information pertaining to the migratory labor force. Agencies receiving targeted funds for migrant programs (i.e. Department of Public Health, Department of Education, Michigan Economics for Human Development) compile statistics on their migrant client populations that are generally published in their annual reports. While these organizations are capable of generating vast amounts of data, in practice,

agency information that is disseminated to the public is usually restricted to identifying the number of migrants served in any given year or program.

Our survey of agency providers revealed that nearly 70 percent of the organizations that were contacted did maintain records on their migrant and seasonal farmworker client population. As shown in Table 2.1, the most frequently collected information reflects demographic data. Approximately 80 percent of the agencies compiled information on the age and gender of their migrant clients. Two out of three of the agencies recorded home base addresses. Sixty percent collected ethnic heritage and health status indicators while 50 percent recorded educational attainment and national origin data. Less than 30 percent of the agencies recorded employment related information (employment status, occupation). Of interest, only five agencies collected job training data-reflecting organizations specializing in those services. Slightly more than one-third of the agencies recorded public assistance participation data. These agencies tend to be those where participation in these programs has become one of the eligibility criteria.

Approximately 80 percent of the respondents indicated that the basic unit of analysis for these data is the individual client. Nearly 15 percent collected data for households and nine percent collected information on families.

**Table 3.1**  
**Migrant Farmworker Information**  
**Collected by Michigan Service Providers**

Type of Information	Agencies Collecting Migrant Client Data	
	Agencies <i>n</i> = 56	Percent of All Agencies
Age	45	80.4
Gender	46	82.1
Marital Status	22	40.0
Home Base Address	38	67.9
Educational Attainment	28	50.0
Employment Status	16	29.1
Occupation	15	26.8
Job Training	5	9.1
National Origin	27	48.2
Ethnic Heritage	33	58.9
Health Status	35	62.5
Disability Status	15	26.8
Public Assistance Participation	20	35.7
Other Information	37	66.1

Most service providers have been collecting data on migrant and seasonal farm laborers for 10 or more years. Less than 29 percent had been compiling statistics on this population for less than five years and 17 percent of the respondents indicated that their organization had collected information on migrants for more than 20 years.

When providers were asked if these data were available for research purposes, 77 percent of the respondents indicated that they were. Only 10 percent of the respondents stated that their agency data were not available for public use while the remainder did not know for sure. The primary reason given for the inaccessibility of agency data was the confidentiality of client records.

Although the majority of service providers collected data on migrant farm worker clients, only a fraction of the agencies have ever conducted studies on this population. Slightly more than one third of the respondents indicated that their agencies had produced one or more studies on migrants. These were generally in the form of annual report information but in some cases, there have been some camp censuses and needs assessments completed. Nevertheless, relatively few agencies are fully utilizing the data they collect on migratory farm laborers.

### **Estimating the Migrant and Seasonal Farmworker Population**

According to most official estimates, between 40,000 and 45,000 migrants (workers and their families) make the annual trek to Michigan. In light of the limitations with existing data collection techniques, an important issue revolves around the manner in which these estimates are made. In this section, we explore how agencies derive these estimates as well as reflect on the difficulties in enumerating the migrant and seasonal farmworker population.

#### **How Many Farm Workers?**

No universal technique nor a single designated entity within the state of Michigan currently provides reliable estimates of the total migrant farm worker population. This is despite the fact that a majority of the agencies within the state *do* collect data on this population. Since existing data are incomplete, most statewide service providers have either produced educated "guesstimates" or use what we might call "voodoo" estimation techniques. As several of our respondents remarked, "Call Person X and ask that person to tell you how many migrants are here," was a frequently used technique for deriving estimates of the migrant farm worker population in Michigan. The problem of enumeration of migrant farm workers that plagues Michigan is one that is longstanding and is encountered in varying degrees across the country.

Adding to the problem of enumeration is how this population is defined. Although there are differences between migrant and seasonal farm workers, most agencies do not report separate information for each group. Moreover, the criteria used to identify migrant farm labor are agency specific. Thus, an individual identified as a migrant using one agency's criteria may not be considered a migrant within another agency. This is particularly true for persons who have left the migrant stream. Most governmental programs have extended periods of service eligibility for former migrants but this period varies from one to six years after leaving migratory farm work. In addition, with service providers targeting specific migrant subpopulations (i.e. children, workers) we encounter another set of difficulties impeding accurate enumeration of this population.

The most comprehensive estimates are derived from several statewide service providers: DSS Office of Migrant Services; Michigan Employment Security Commission; Michigan Department of Public Health; and the Migrant Student Record Transfer System. Nonetheless, no single agency is currently able to provide an unduplicated count of this population nor would it seem likely to be possible in the near future. We will now briefly describe the enumeration techniques utilized by each of these agencies as well as the coverage of the migrant population.

#### **Department of Social Services, Office of Migrant Services**

The Office of Migrant Services in the Michigan Department of Social Services provides assistance to approximately 21,000 low income migrants annually. Important elements in the eligibility criteria which restricts this population are economic status and U.S. citizenship or legal residency. Data on migrants are collected on a monthly basis for each county in the state and reflect active cases. Estimates are reported with both duplicated and unduplicated counts of families as well as individuals served. Agency estimates have been calculated for the migrant population since 1979.

#### **Michigan Employment Security Commission (MESC)**

Prior to the mid-1970s, MESC provided what was considered to be the most complete estimate of the migrant farmworker population because most agricultural placements on Michigan farms were handled by this office. Indeed, their annual reports are an excellent source of historical data for this population. However, since the 1970s, fewer job placements have been coordinated through MESC. Therefore, current agency statistics tend to underestimate the number of migrant workers in Michigan farms.

In the past five years, an average of 15,000 workers were employed in Michigan agriculture annually through MESC placements. Migrant farm workers are defined as "a seasonal farm worker who has to travel to do farm work so that he/she is unable to return

to his/her permanent place of residence the same day." In addition, at least half of earned annual income is derived from farm work. Estimates cover the working adult population served by the agency. MESC has estimated that slightly more than 40,000 farm workers are needed on an annual basis on Michigan farms.

### **Michigan Department of Public Health**

The Michigan Department of Public Health derives estimates of the migrant population from two sources: the migrant labor camp listing which identifies the number of licensed agricultural labor camps and their total capacity; and the unduplicated counts of patients served in the migrant health clinics. Statistics on migrant labor camps are available for at least 24 years. Current capacity is for approximately 28,000 workers. It is important to note that licensed labor camps reflect those sites employing five or more agricultural workers and total capacity is based on a minimal square footage space per adult.

Another source of information on migrants is derived from the unduplicated counts of patients attended in migrant health clinics throughout the state. Estimates based on these data suggest that approximately 48,000 migrants and their families have been using migrant health centers in Michigan in recent years.

### **Migrant Student Record Transfer System (MSRTS)**

Approximately 20,000 children of migrant farm workers come to Michigan annually and attend migrant education programs. During the past 18 years, the MSRTS program has offered a computerized tracking system which enables school districts to receive information about children that are crossing school district lines with adults engaged in agricultural work. The student population is defined as "children between the ages of 0 to 21 in families who have crossed state or school district lines within the past six years for the purpose of obtaining temporary agricultural or fishing related employment."

Since each of these agencies work with slightly different populations, we do not have a neat and tidy method for enumerating the migrant farm worker population. Moreover, no mathematical estimation technique is currently being used that allows for a more reliable count or projection of the size of this population. What we are able to glean from these agency statistics are patterns of concentration and crude measurements of variation in service utilization.



### **Migrant and Seasonal Agricultural Survey--Methodology**

A survey instrument was designed to address the following topics:

1. the types of services available to migrants;
2. agency definitions of migrant and seasonal agricultural workers;
3. estimates of the migrant and seasonal farm labor population;
4. characteristics of the migrant and seasonal population;
5. agency data collection techniques; and
6. provider perceptions of the service needs of migrant and seasonal agricultural workers.

A copy of the questionnaire is provided in Appendix A.

After pretesting several versions of the survey instrument, the final version of the questionnaire consisted of 37 items. Items 1 through 32 which reflect agency and client information were precoded for use in a machine readable data file. Items 33 through 37 were open-ended questions which allowed the respondents to comment on the service needs of the population as well as enumerate policy recommendations. These items were compiled for qualitative analysis. Two bilingual interviewers completed the data collection activities during the summer of 1989.

Data was collected via telephone interview with the agency director or other designated administrative staff person. On average, the interviews required 30 minutes to complete. However, this varied widely. Some interviews were completed in 15 minutes and a small number of interviews exceeded one hour. All interviews were conducted in English.

### **Procedures Utilized in the Selection of the Study Population**

Organizations included in the study were identified using the most recently published Migrant Resource Directories for the 11 designated regions across the state as well as from information provided by lead agency administrators who were asked to enumerate other agencies working with migrant and seasonal farm laborers. These efforts produced an initial listing of 136 agencies located within the lower peninsula of Michigan.

Agencies included in this listing provided services in one or more of the following areas: education, employment, health, legal assistance, or social welfare. Both public and private organizations were included. Some of the agencies provided services to residents within a particular county while others serviced multiple counties or the entire state of Michigan.

As data collection progressed, this agency listing was modified to exclude agencies which did not actually serve migrants or which have ceased operation ( $n=16$ ). Also omitted from the interviewing process were centers which were really branch offices of larger organizations ( $n=19$ ). Information about these satellite offices was obtained when the primary agencies were contacted. After these adjustments were made to the original listing, a total of 101 agencies comprised the core of organizations included in the study population.

Approximately 83 percent of the service providers completed the survey ( $n=84$ ). The remaining 17 percent of the agencies for which data were not collected reflect organizations that we were unable to contact despite multiple attempts to complete the interview. Potential bias of in this population may result from the nonresponse of a number of organizations located in the southeastern part of the state. Nonetheless, our study population closely mirrors the characteristics of the larger grouping of agencies serving migrant and seasonal agricultural workers in the State of Michigan.

### Summary

- The study of Migrant and seasonal farmworkers is complicated by the lack of a uniform definition of this population and outdated information.
- Information about migrant agricultural labor in the Midwest, and particularly in Michigan, is sketchy.
- The majority of the service providers in Michigan that work with migrants do keep records of their client populations. Agencies enumerate the size of the migrant client population as well as maintain basic information on age, gender, health status, home base, ethnicity, and educational attainment.
- Our survey of service providers sought information about the size, characteristics, and needs of migrant farmworkers as well as information about the level and type of services provided by agencies within the state.
- Our survey of service providers was completed in the summer of 1989. Approximately 83 percent of the providers contacted by the researchers completed the survey instrument.

## CHAPTER IV

### PROFILE OF MIGRANT AND SEASONAL FARMWORKERS

As we have seen in the earlier chapters, migrant workers have been an integral part of Michigan agriculture for most of the 20th century. Moreover, recent trends in Michigan agriculture suggest that the need for migrant labor will continue to be at the same or higher level in the decade ahead. Yet, we only have a sketchy picture of what the migrant farm worker population is like. Who are the people that harvested farm commodities with an estimated value of 758 million dollars in 1987? Where do they come from? Why do they come here? In this chapter, we develop a profile of Michigan's migrant and seasonal farm labor force.

#### Post-Bracero Trends in Migrant Farm Labor

Since the mid-1960s, the number of hired farm workers employed in Michigan has been highly unstable with marked declines through 1970; slight gains in both the mid and late 1970s; and a sharp decline after 1980. Unfortunately, statistics collected after 1983 do not provide separate estimates for Michigan. Nevertheless, we believe that the number of hired farm workers has remained relatively stable since 1983.

Estimates of the migrant farm worker population are difficult to gauge since the characteristics and size of this population are not adequately documented. However, changes in the migrant labor population may be traced using migrant camp capacity as a proxy. The Michigan Department of Public Health collects data annually via the camp licensing program, which covers all migrant camps with five or more workers. In 1988, there were 880 licensed camps in Michigan.

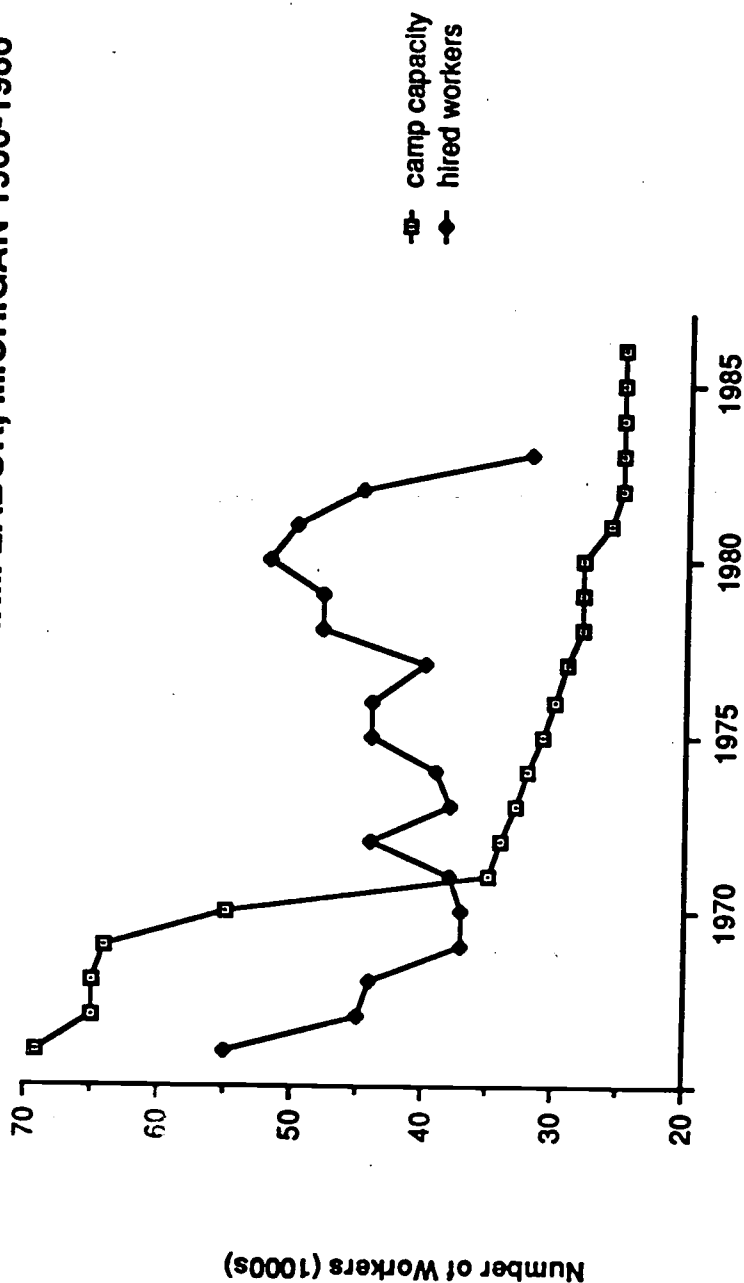
From these data we can see that migrant camp capacity fell sharply between 1969 and 1971. Throughout the 1970s, the number of licensed camps continued to decline, but the decrease was more gradual. Since 1980, camp capacity has remained fairly stable. There is recent evidence that suggests slight increases in the demand for camp housing.

#### Points of Origin

Migrant farmworkers who come to Michigan are part of two major migrant streams: the Eastern route and the Midcontinental route. The East Coast Stream is comprised of American Blacks, Chicanos, Mexicanos, Anglos, Caribbean Blacks, and Puerto Ricans (see Shotland *et al*, 1989). Individuals traveling in this stream generally maintain a home base in South Florida although others originate from Alabama or Arkansas. Recently, a number of Texas migrants have joined this stream.

FIGURE 4.1

# TRENDS IN HIRED AND MIGRANT FARM LABOR, MICHIGAN 1966-1986



Sources: Michigan Department of Agriculture, Michigan Agricultural Statistics various years; Michigan Department of Public Health, Shelter Environment Section, Annual Reports of 1986.

The Midcontinental Stream originates in the Rio Grande Valley and from Mexico. The majority of the migrants in this stream are Chicanos or Mexican nationals, although some American Indians will follow this route as well. This is the largest route: most migrant farm workers are part of this migrant stream. Movement flows northward to the Midwest and Western states and there has also been some movement to Florida and other Eastern states (Shotland *et al*, 1989).

### **Reasons for Coming to Michigan**

The decision to join the migrant stream is mitigated by two principal factors: earnings instability and family size. On the one hand, chronic unemployment and underemployment in home base areas (i.e. Rio Grande Valley in Texas) generally force limited-skilled and poorly educated workers to seek additional work in other areas. Migrating to the north, farm laborers can seek temporary employment to supplement earnings during slack periods at home.

Family size is extremely important in the decision to work as migratory farm labor. Families with several children who are old enough to work in the fields (8 years or older) can significantly increase family income if everyone works together in agriculture. By combining the labor of several family members, earnings often exceed wages obtained through regular, full-time employment at home. As a result, it is common to see large households make the trip north to states such as Michigan in the summer (Shotland *et al*, 1989).

In addition to the economic incentives to temporarily migrate north, active recruitment efforts on the part of growers and employment agencies are conducted each winter. Large growers send recruiters to home base areas in Texas and Florida to identify potential workers. Moreover, Job Service offices periodically send announcements to these areas regarding anticipated openings in agriculture within their states. In recent years, however, these efforts have been rather sporadic.

Since many of the migrant farm workers reflect several generations of farm labor, another major "pull" factor to Michigan represents direct contacts between growers and workers. If particular families have worked well with a grower, it is not unusual for the grower to invite these families back regularly as well as maintain contact with them at their home bases. Likewise, migrants prefer to return to growers who offer good working conditions and employment opportunities.

### **Characteristics of the Migrant and Seasonal Farm Worker Population**

The following sections describe the characteristics of the migrant and seasonal farm worker population from the perspective of our service providers. This description focuses on the following characteristics: citizenship and ethnicity; family composition; and age and sex composition. We develop a separate profile for both migrant farmworkers and seasonal farm laborers.

#### **Migrant Farm Worker Population**

**Definition.** Approximately 90 percent of our respondents were able to describe the migrant population that was served by their agency. In general, agency providers defined their migrant farm workers as adults and their accompanying dependents as engaged primarily in agricultural employment on a seasonal basis and who established temporary residence in Michigan. Most migrants had crossed either state or county boundaries.

**Citizenship and ethnicity.** Although a number of agencies do not ask for citizenship information, most respondents indicated that their migrant farm worker population as one which is comprised primarily of U.S. citizens and legal residents. Providers suggest that only a small fraction of this population was comprised of undocumented aliens.

According to our respondents, between 50 and 100 percent of the migrant farm workers in their areas are of Mexican descent. In addition, small numbers of other Hispanic subpopulations are part of the migrant stream. Puerto Ricans, Guatemalans, Salvadorans, Cubans, and Hondurans are also coming to work on Michigan farms. Blacks comprise a relatively small portion of the migrant population. Providers estimated that five percent of all migrants are American Black, Haitian, or Jamaican. Asians (identified primarily as Laotian) also are a small portion of this population. In contrast, few of the providers mentioned that whites, primarily from the south, participated in significant numbers as migratory farm labor. Other groups in the migrant labor force include Middle Easterners, American Indians, and French Canadians.

Of interest, the ethnic composition of the migrant labor force varies by region. Overall, the migrant population becomes more diverse in the eastern part of the state, especially in the Thumb Area. On the other hand, the overwhelming majority of migrants in Western Michigan are Chicanos or Mexican nationals.

**Migrant family composition.** Only a few respondents reported that their migrant farm worker client population was comprised of single males. Most providers underscore that Michigan farm workers are part of a massive movement of young families. Moreover, a number of these households reflect an extended family situation in order to maximize the earning potential within the family unit.

**Age and gender composition.** Providers stress that the migrant population is young. Several respondents remarked that few migrants are 45 years or older. Farm workers tended to be young adults in their 20s and 30s accompanied by their children. Furthermore, only a handful of respondents indicated that migrants in their areas are predominantly male. Both males and females in relatively equal proportions are working on Michigan farms.

### **Seasonal Farm Worker Population**

**Definition.** Only a fraction of our respondents maintained separate information on seasonal agricultural workers (13 percent of total respondents,  $n = 11$ ). In contrast to the definition of migrant farm workers, seasonal farm workers represented individuals who resided generally in the same region or county where they worked. Work in agriculture is seasonal and most seasonal workers are employed less than 250 days in agriculture.

**Citizenship and ethnicity.** Most seasonal farm workers are U.S. citizens or legal residents. Although the majority are of Mexican descent, a large proportion are white or Asian. Providers in the Thumb Area of the state are more likely to report that their seasonal farm worker populations are more diverse with higher percentages of white ethnics and Asians. Among the Asians, it seems that Laotians are more likely to work in agriculture. However, it must be noted that there is only very sketchy information about Asian farm labor in Michigan at this time.

**Family composition.** Respondent information suggests that most seasonal workers are single individuals or older adult couples. Unlike migrant farm workers, very few seasonal farm workers are part of a larger family unit working the crops together. Limited evidence suggests that families in the southwestern part of the state seem to be more likely to engage in seasonal farm work than in other portions of the state, but their numbers are relatively small.



**Age and gender.** Our respondents stated that seasonal farm workers are predominantly young adult males. Nonetheless, several providers indicated that older adults are also doing farm work. This pattern of older workers is most evident in the Thumb and southwestern portions of the state.

### **Summary**

- Our survey of service providers gave us a set of general descriptions of migrant and seasonal farm workers in Michigan.
- We note that few use a consistent or precise definition for their client groups. Crossing state or county lines for work in agriculture is a common description of migrant farm workers.
- Most migrant and seasonal workers are described as legal aliens. Migrants are primarily of Mexican descent. Asians are making an impact, although they are still a small fraction of the farm workers. Blacks are a small part of the migrant population.
- Whole families (with children) constitute the main units of migrant workers. Most are considered to be young families.

## **CHAPTER V**

### **STRUCTURE OF INSTITUTIONS AND THEIR SERVICES**

The State of Michigan provides an array of services for migrant and seasonal farm workers (MSFWs). Services are offered statewide by both public service bodies and nonprofit organizations. Moreover, a number of organizations have a regional or local focus. These services span a spectrum of migrant needs: from child care to programs for senior citizens; from medical care to educational programs; from job training to substance abuse counseling. This chapter examines the structure of migrant service delivery system in the state and briefly describe the content of a few of the programs available.

#### **Statewide Public Services**

To a certain extent, administrative departments at the state level serve a political role: Agency directors are appointed by the governor (although through varying processes) and, as part of the state apparatus, work closely with him. Various government commissions also work to support MSFWs, mainly through advocacy, problem resolution, and publication. On the other hand, state administrative bodies focus on providing human services such as education, health, and welfare. Figure 5.1 provides a summary of the structure of public sector services to migrant and seasonal farm workers.

#### **Commissions**

The commissions are largely political bodies, since their role is to advise the governor. The **Agricultural Labor Commission**, composed of representatives from the agriculture and farm labor sectors (but not including any MSFWs themselves), functions to:

1. cooperate with all agencies and committees concerned with agricultural labor;
2. "conduct a continuing education program to acquaint people with the importance of agricultural labor and the sources from which it can be recruited"; and
3. advocate for the Governor and for MSFWs.

The **Commission on Spanish-Speaking Affairs** serves to make reports and recommendations to the governor on questions pertaining to Hispanics and other Spanish-speaking individuals in general.

## **Departments**

Michigan's administrative structure contains several bodies that serve migrant and seasonal farm workers. The lead public service agency is the **Office of Migrant Services** within the **Department of Social Services**. This office serves to assess, develop, and coordinate services among the various public agencies. Its other functions include:

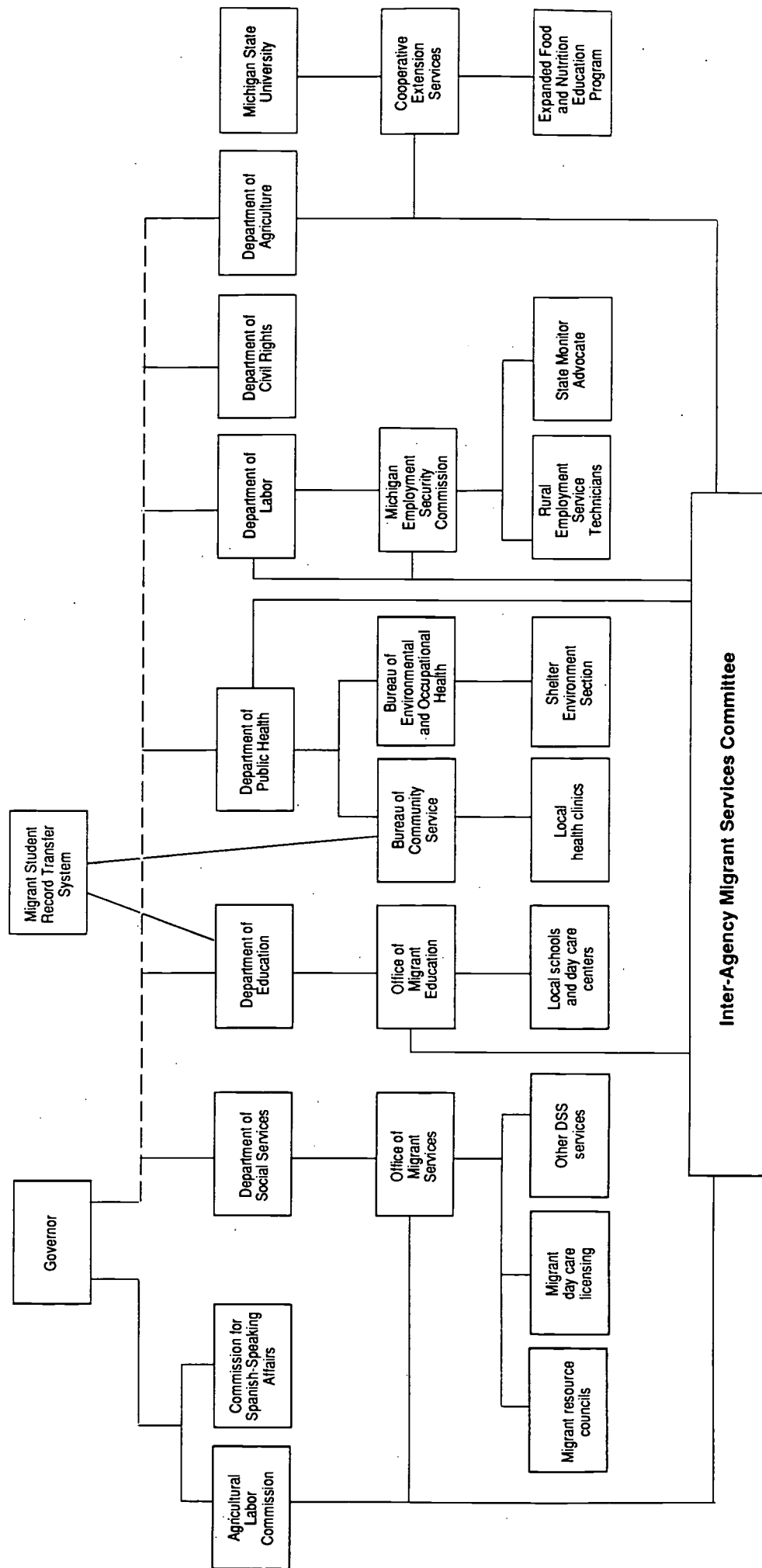
1. Chairing the Governor's Inter-Agency Migrant Services Committee<sup>2</sup>;
2. Coordinating the 11 Migrant Resource Councils, which serve the 42 counties with the highest population of migrants;
3. Advocating for better services from the Department of Social Services (DSS) and on behalf of migrants during the formulation process of departmental stances on proposed federal and state legislation;
4. Licensing day care providers and contracting with local day care centers; and
5. Providing outreach and determining eligibility for various DSS services, including: day care, food stamps, hospitalization, protective services, emergency housing, food, and transportation.

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<sup>2</sup>Members include, besides the Director of the Office of Migrant Services, representatives from the following bodies: Michigan Department of Agriculture; Office of Migrant Education, Michigan Department of Education; Michigan Department of Labor; Michigan Employment Security Commission; Michigan Department of Public Health; Michigan Farm Bureau; Commission on Agriculture; Michigan Economics for Human Development; Michigan Migrant Legal Assistance Project; and Michigan State University's Cooperative Extension Service.

Figure 5 . 1

# Statewide Public Services



The **Michigan Department of Education** also offers many services to MSFWs and their families through its **Office of Migrant Education**. This Office funds summer and fall programs in the local school districts; provides some day care through contract agreements with DSS Office of Migrant Services; and offers specially-designed curricula to meet the needs of migrant children. Eligible children are recruited throughout the state and their participation is based on parental consent. The Office of Migrant Education also administers the Migrant Student Record Transfer System for our state.

The **Migrant Student Record Transfer System (MSRTS)** is a federally funded nationwide database of health and education information on migrant children. Local schools and clinics need only tap into the database to obtain current information on children's needs; no time is wasted in repeatedly having to identify the education and health status of each child after each move. Students can be tracked throughout the nation. The number of children recorded by MSRTS is the official tally used by the Department of Education to allocate funding to local school districts for their migrant programs.

**Michigan Department of Public Health** serves migrants in different ways through two bureaus: indirectly, through the **Shelter Environment Section** of the **Bureau of Environmental and Occupational Health**, and directly, through the **Bureau of Community Services**. Shelter Environment, as its name would suggest, concerns itself with matters pertaining to the quality and safety of farm worker housing and working conditions. In addition to administering Michigan's Migratory Labor Housing Construction Grant Program for the building and renovation of housing, it also is responsible for licensing all labor camps housing five or more farm workers. Seven registered sanitarians (assisted by some seasonal staff) inspect all camps and farms in the state twice each year for adherence to safety and health standards in housing and in the fields. This office is also able to initiate legal proceedings to effect compliance with its regulations. The Bureau of Community Services contracts with local clinics to deliver a variety of health services to MSFWs.

Matching workers and jobs (both within and outside the agricultural sector) is the main function of the **Michigan Employment Security Commission (MESC)**. This body also serves as administrator of unemployment insurance and the Interstate Clearance Order Program. In addition, MESC does training, testing, and counseling. The agency provides referrals to other supportive services. Their outreach workers seek out migrant and seasonal farmworkers both in Michigan and in the migrants' places of permanent residence (i.e., Texas, Florida). They also attend Migrant Resource Council meetings. The two Rural Employment Service Technicians (RESTs) are responsible for directing the staff working with MSFWs throughout the state. The State Migrant Farm Worker Monitor Advocate serves to assure compliance of MESC to the employment needs of the MSFW client population and to investigate complaints.

District Offices of the **United States Department of Labor** serve MSFWs by enforcing compliance with the Federal Fair Labor Standards Act through investigation of complaints. They also enforce Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) standards, and coordinate the Clearance Orders from MESC to other states. The **Michigan Department of Labor** indirectly serves MSFWs by investigating complaints regarding grower noncompliance to OSHA standards for housing and working conditions and to State wage and hour laws.

Michigan's **Department of Civil Rights** also provides services to migrant and seasonal farm workers through its investigations of complaints regarding discrimination or other violations of an individual's civil rights. The Department also schedules public hearings on related issues, such as the one that took place on 29 August 1989 regarding the rights and needs of migrant and seasonal farm workers.

The **Cooperative Extension Service** at **Michigan State University** has an **Expanded Food and Nutrition Program (EFNEP)** which targets some of their projects at low-income families. A few migrant families have taken part in the program, which teaches good nutrition habits and healthier methods of cooking.

Two other agencies need to be mentioned that deal with farm workers, although perhaps not always serving as advocates. The **Michigan Department of Agriculture** administers a testing and licensing program for pesticide applicators and users and investigates complaints of pesticide poisoning. It also cooperates with the **USDA Michigan Agriculture Reporting Services** for the gathering and publication of agricultural statistics, and coordinates the annual **Governor's Conference on Agriculture** which sometimes includes farm labor-related issues. The **United States Immigration and Naturalization Service** monitors the legal status of U.S. citizens and residents who live and work in this country and disseminates information to the public on new immigration laws and penalties for violations.

### **Statewide Nongovernmental Organizations**

A number of statewide non-governmental organizations (NGOs) also operate in Michigan(see Figure 5.2). Some of their programs for migrant and seasonal farm workers are similar as those offered by the State of Michigan, but since they often have varied sources of funding, many NGOs are not limited to providing services only to individuals who meet specific eligibility requirements (i.e. citizenship).

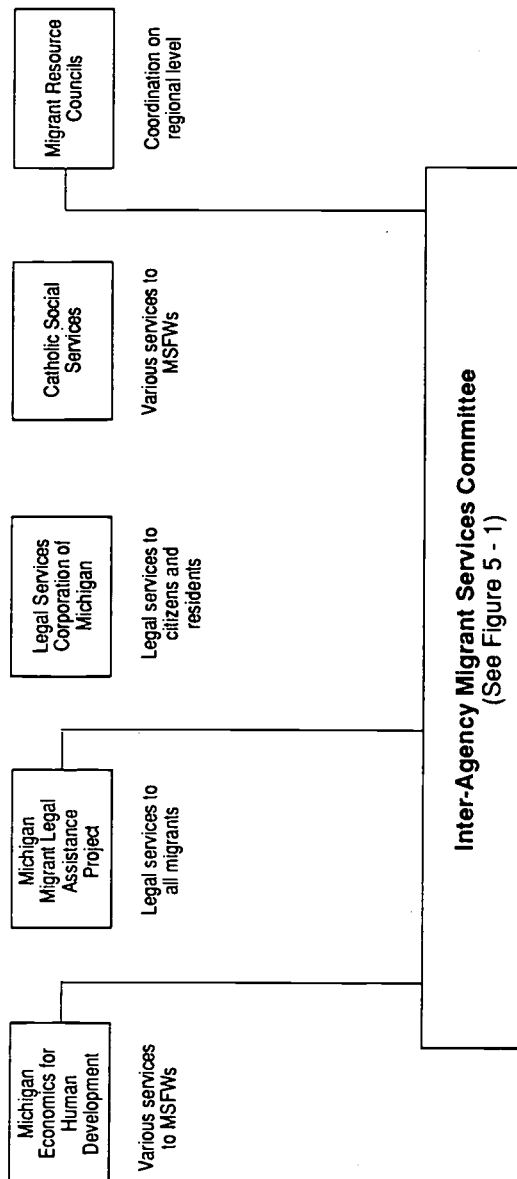
The lead nongovernmental agency is **Michigan Economics for Human Development (MEHD)**, formerly known as **United Migrants for Opportunity, Inc.** It was formed with the objective "to plan, implement, and coordinate comprehensive services for migrant and other seasonal farm workers" and has since expanded its scope to include all disadvantaged

individuals. Their network of offices throughout the state provide services to farm workers in the following areas:

1. Migrant health clinics (funded by the Michigan Department of Public Health)
2. Child care, through special migrant day care centers
3. Head Start programs exclusively for migrant children, and Head Start for Kent County
4. Nutrition services through Day Care Head Start Meals, WIC, and Commodity Food Distribution
5. Employment and training services, including administering the JPTA-402 grant (Job Training Partnership Act)
6. Special low-income housing for migrants, the elderly and handicapped individuals
7. Weatherization assistance
8. Child sexual abuse prevention
9. Emergency financial assistance

Figure 5 . 2

# Statewide Non-Profit Services





Legal services are provided by the **Michigan Migrant Legal Assistance Project (MMLAP)**, a private non profit agency funded by the Legal Services Fund Corporation. MMLAP provides free legal counseling for low income migrants in cases dealing with matters such as health, social services, evictions, discrimination, and constitutional rights. This agency is actively engaged in class action litigation on behalf of farm workers. Also providing legal assistance is the **Legal Services Corporation of Michigan**. The organization serves legal residents in issues dealing with senior citizens, housing, domestic relations and public benefits. Moreover, each Legal Services office also operates a Pro Bono program in cooperation with local attorneys who are not limited by the residency restriction; clients are referred to these lawyers who provide their services on a cost free basis.

**Catholic Social Services** is another agency providing non-profit human services to the poor throughout the state. Services provided vary according to diocese, but typically include: education, English classes, family mental health, pesticides safety, AIDS awareness, substance abuse and other counseling, food and clothing, senior citizens programs, interpretation, and mobile units that provide outreach to the migrant camps.

Two of its satellites, **El Centro** in Muskegon and Holland, works for advocacy of Hispanics in general and offers job placement, translation, immigration services, a summer youth program, a senior citizens program, and cultural enrichment activities. The latter three services are targeted specifically toward the farm worker population. Coordination of services for seven Michigan dioceses is provided by the **Michigan Catholic Conference**, which also advocates for MSFWs in public policy issues and offers immigration services.

The **11 Migrant Resource Councils** provide coverage to 42 of Michigan's 83 counties that are the most heavily populated by migrant and seasonal farm workers. Each council is comprised of service providers and other interested individuals who meet to identify unmet needs and to resolve problems on the grassroots level. They also provide local resource directories which are useful to service providers in their areas. In fact, these service directories served as the basis for our sampling frame of agencies that were included in this study. The 11 Councils are coordinated by the Department of Social Services Office of Migrant Services.

### **Regional Organizations**

Other organizations exist to serve farm workers on a regional level, making their services specific to the needs of farm workers in a particular geographical area. These agencies exist because they can often better identify local needs and respond more quickly to address them than can organizations that exist at the State level. The regional services that we identified primarily include health services and community action programs.

The migrant health clinics are an example of regional organizations. While they cooperate with the Department of Public Health, they have their own structures and networks of clinics. They also feed their information on children into the Migrant Student Record Transfer System. **Health Delivery, Inc., (HDI)** provides medical and dental services, information and referral (I/R), and emergency assistance to migrants in the Thumb region. In addition, they fund the **Sanilac County Migrant Ministry Center** in Sandusky which distributes food, clothing, and furniture; provides emergency assistance with expenses such as gas; and provides language interpretations, transportation, and I/R. In addition, HDI operates two other clinics that will serve any individual meeting the poverty criteria. **Northwest Michigan Health Services, Inc.,** has three clinics in the regions of Traverse Bay, Shelby, and Manistee. This health provider offers services such as: primary medical and dental care, health education, substance abuse counseling, family planning, and information/referral. The agency provides financial assistance for their referrals. In Southwestern Michigan, migrants and indigent persons in rural areas can obtain primary health care from one of the four clinics operated by the **Migrant and Rural Community Health Association (MARCHA)**. They also have a mobile unit that can bring their services to people not able to come to them. Other health clinics exist throughout Michigan, but the will not be detailed here because they are part of another agency, or because they exist on a local scale.

We also identified several community action programs in the western region of the state: **Five-CAP** in Scottville, and **Eight-CAP** in Greenville and satellite offices elsewhere in the region. These programs, while not targeted specifically to migrant and seasonal farm workers, do minister to them, especially through services such as nutrition, job training, weatherization, legal aid, and emergency assistance programs. Many other community action programs operate on the local level, such as **VanCasCAP** in Southwestern Michigan and **Community Action Agency of Lenawee County**.

#### **Grassroots Level Service Providers**

A number of community-based organizations (CBOs) exist throughout the state to service farm workers. They came about as local responses to unique problems; such organizations are quite effective in identifying and addressing the needs of the constantly mobile MSFWs because they are in the field where this population is located. They operate with a smaller lag time between identification and servicing of needs because of their small size. In addition, the target population tends to be more strictly defined for each program.

As a result of diverse funding sources and differing mandates for service, grassroots programs tend not to be limited to serving legal residents although many restrict services to individuals residing in their local community. CBOs generally provide more accessible, culturally sensitive services on an outreach-oriented basis. Service providers on this level, as contrasted with those on with wider service areas, identified different sets of needs that migrant and seasonal farm workers have. Those at the state level identified problems such as housing, accessibility of services, and education in general. In contrast, grassroots providers cited needs such as a service directory for migrants, a network to link up migrants and housing, orientation and outreach requirements for other service providers, cultural sensitivity training, and a "welcome center" for migrants at an entry point to Michigan. A few of these micro-level service providers merit special attention.

Sometimes grassroots organizations have religious foundations: this makes sense because the majority of the migrants are Hispanic and Catholic--cultural norms mean they turn first to the church for help. The **Guadalupe Center** in Bay City, which provides nutritional and family services as well as emergency assistance, is housed in a church. The **Bishop's Committee for Migrants** in Hartford is staffed by members of the Catholic Church and offers, in addition to religious services, food, clothing, and counseling in the camps. **Catholic Human Development** of Grand Rapids offers nutrition services, counseling, emergency assistance, and immigration services; migrants form the majority of their clientele for the latter services.

**Cristo Rey** of Lansing, funded by the Catholic Diocese and the United Way, provides many of the following services for migrants and other Hispanics: Head Start; a health clinic (which serves mostly migrants and has two satellites); substance abuse counseling; family and individual counseling; Job Training Partnership Act referrals; emergency assistance; interpretations; and a handicappers program. They also operate a "welcome wagon" which they take to the camps to provide recreational activities. Many agencies have mobile units which take their services to the migrants in their place of residence. The American Red Cross in Holland has started an **AIDS Awareness Program** for migrants. The coordinator of the program, a bilingual/bicultural individual, takes her educational material directly to all 59 camps in Ottawa County and provides information and counseling to thousands of migrants "on their own terms." **Latin**

**American Family Services** in Holland has a similar program for substance abuse education and treatment. These are culturally sensitive programs that reach a section of the population not served by other providers.

Various agencies have been innovative in the area of housing for migrants. Catholic Human Development created **Casa de la Paz** for homeless people in Grand Rapids. It was originally started for migrants, but has now branched out to include other poor people.

Good Samaritan in Holland operates **Via Aurora**, a shelter, in addition to tutoring on an outreach basis. In Traverse City, the **Good Samaritan Housing Center** that migrants among its client population.

Some organizations exist to serve Hispanics in general, and have found themselves increasingly involved with migrant and seasonal farm workers--and not just the Hispanics among them. An example would be the **Hispanic Service Center** in Imlay City, which serves people of Middle Eastern and Oriental descent, among others. The **Spanish Speaking Information Center** in Flint also includes Jamaicans, Canadians, and Arabs among its clients, although Hispanics are their target audience. They will serve all clients with a wide range of services, including education, prenatal health care and nutrition services, counseling, job training and placement, financial aid, and immigration assistance. **Hispanic Counseling Services** in Bay City serves only Hispanics, and is typical of other agencies that do not provide services exclusively for MSFWs, but do have bilingual/bicultural staff and may also offer outreach services to the camps.

Some organizations have special programs for or exist only to serve Hispanic senior citizens. The **Hispanic Community Agency** in Bay City serves elderly persons with meals and other activities, translation, and transportation. Senior citizens are also served by **El Centro** in Holland (part of Catholic Social Services). Their program provides outreach, case management, and interpretation for the elderly in Ottawa county, including many seasonal farm workers.

Another area of service that should not be overlooked is recreation; many organizations operate cultural enrichment and entertainment activities specifically for migrants. These are important because they give the farm workers a chance to relax and socialize on their own terms. The **Migrant and Bilingual Department** at the Van Buren Intermediate School District has evening family recreation activities, as does the **Bilingual/Migrant Office** at Holland Public Schools. The **Spanish-Speaking Information Center** in Flint also offers activities on cultural enrichment.

### **Summary**

- Those agencies that exist on an outreach basis appear to be very effective in meeting the needs of migrant and seasonal farm workers. At the same time, the advocacy efforts of the statewide service providers should not be overlooked.
- Michigan offers a unique set of services for migrant and seasonal farmworkers, and while there do remain gaps in service provision, the initiative and achievements of existing service agencies must be recognized.
- Our survey has identified over 100 service providers in Michigan, each with a unique set of programs and client groups.
- Statewide public entities include agencies, departments and commissions.
- Numerous regional bodies provide an array of services.
- The most prolific, "spontaneous" providers are found at the local level, in communities and special districts.

## **CHAPTER VI**

### **NEEDS ASSESSMENT**

#### **Overview**

Approximately 90 percent of the agencies responding to our survey provided direct services to clients. For the most part, providers in Michigan attended to migrant farm workers needs as a part of their regular services. Only 20 percent of the service providers had programs targeted for migrant and seasonal agricultural workers exclusively (i.e. migrant educational programs, migrant health clinics). Moreover, many of the existing services were available only to individuals who meet particular eligibility requirements. Some programs were available to U.S. citizens only; some focused on particular age groups (i.e. children, elderly); and others focused on low income populations.

Therefore, although a number of agencies provide services to migrant farm workers in Michigan, we must be careful not to assume that the existing service structure is adequate to meet farm worker needs. In this chapter, we examine the structure and distribution of these services. The final section of this chapter is devoted to a discussion of provider perceptions of migrant problems and the difficulties that are encountered by agency personnel as they attempt to meet service needs.

#### **Profile of Existing Services**

Table 6.1 shows the most common services that were available to clients in Michigan were information and referral: 74 percent of all agencies in the state provided these services. In addition, approximately one-half of the respondents indicated that their organizations provided educational services. The majority of these organizations were school programs. Slightly less than one half of the agencies provided nutritional services. In most cases, this reflected school and day care lunch programs. Only one quarter of the respondents provided day care services.

In the area of health, 37 percent of the agencies provided medical and/or dental care. A number of clinics focused on immunizations and urgent care; others focused on prevention and health education. One program trained camp health aides. Another program focused on AIDS education. In contrast, mental health services were limited: only 17 percent of the agencies had substance abuse treatment programs.

**Table 6.1**

**Rank Order of Services Available to Migrant and Other Clients in Michigan**

<b>Type of Service  (Rank Order)</b>	<b>Agencies Providing Services</b>	
	<b><i>n</i> = 84</b>	<b>Percent of Total</b>
1. Information/Referral	62	73.8
2. Educational Services	44	52.4
3. Nutritional Services	40	47.6
4. Health Care	31	36.9
5. Emergency Assistance	31	36.9
6. Individual Counseling	24	28.6
7. Day Care	21	25.0
8. Family Counseling	20	23.8
9. Job Counseling	17	20.2
10. Job Placement	16	19.0
11. Financial Assistance	15	17.9
12. Substance Abuse	14	16.7
13. Housing	12	14.3
14. Job Training	11	13.1
15. Immigration	8	9.5
16. Legal Services	8	9.5
Other Services	58	69.0



Less than 20 percent of the agencies provided employment related services. Clients were more likely to receive job counseling or job placement than they were to receive training. Moreover, these services were specifically targeted to serve adults.

Nearly 37 percent of the respondents stated that their agencies provided emergency assistance to those in need. In addition to clothing banks and food pantries, 18 percent offered financial assistance to clients. Approximately 15 percent provided housing assistance either in the form of providing shelter or the funds to acquire shelter.

Relatively few agencies provided counseling services. Slightly less than 30 percent of the respondents indicated that their agency had individual counseling sessions. One-quarter of the providers offered family counseling.

Only a handful of agencies provided legal assistance (10 percent). This assistance varies from help with civil or domestic matters to work related to immigration and amnesty. Several of the agencies are also heavily involved in class action litigation.

As we can see, seventy percent of the agencies provide services in other areas. These services range from senior citizen programs to home weatherization.

#### **Services Exclusively for Migrant and Seasonal Farmworkers**

According to the data presented in Table 6.2, approximately 55 percent of all agencies with MSFW programs provided educational services. Information/referral services to migrants were cited by 45 percent of the respondents. Again, there was a close link between education, day care, and nutritional services. Migrant day care was available in 28 percent of the agencies. Slightly more than 26 percent of the agencies provided nutritional services primarily in the form of school lunch programs.

Health care in the form of migrant health clinics was available in 36 percent of the agencies. Of interest was the extremely small percentage of organizations providing substance abuse treatment programs for migrants. Approximately 11 percent of all agencies have bilingual services for migrant substance abusers. Only a handful of agencies have developed employment related programs for MSFW's. Less than eight percent of the respondents provided job counseling or placement services. Only three providers (6 percent) were involved in job training for migrants.

Counseling, either for individuals or families, was provided by relatively few providers (15 percent). Moreover, a number of these agencies offered counseling services on an informal basis. Thus, these services were not always a part of the regular programming; instead they were more dependent upon the initiative of individual workers who extended these services to their clients.



**Table 6.2**  
**Rank Order of Services Exclusively for Migrant**  
**and Seasonal Agricultural Workers**

Type of service  (Rank Order)	Agencies Providing Service	
	<i>n</i> = 53	Percent of Total
1. Educational Services	29	54.7
2. Information/Referral	24	45.3
3. Health Care	19	35.8
4. Nutritional Services	14	26.4
5. Day Care	15	28.3
6. Emergency Assistance	9	17.0
6. Individual Counseling	9	17.0
7. Family Counseling	8	15.1
8. Substance Abuse	6	11.3
9. Job Counseling	4	7.5
9. Job Placement	4	7.5
10. Financial Assistance	3	5.7
10. Housing	3	5.7
10. Job Training	3	5.7
10. Legal Services	3	5.7
11. Immigration	2	3.8
Other Services	30	56.6

Less than 20 percent of the agencies with MSFW programs provided emergency assistance to migrants. Furthermore, these services were more likely to focus on food and clothing. Only three respondents indicated that they had programs offering financial assistance or housing assistance to migrant farm workers.

In terms of legal assistance exclusively for migrants, only three agencies in the state offered these services. Two agencies provide help with immigration and amnesty problems. These services were generally restricted to low income individuals and in some agencies, only available to U.S. citizens who are part of the migrant stream.

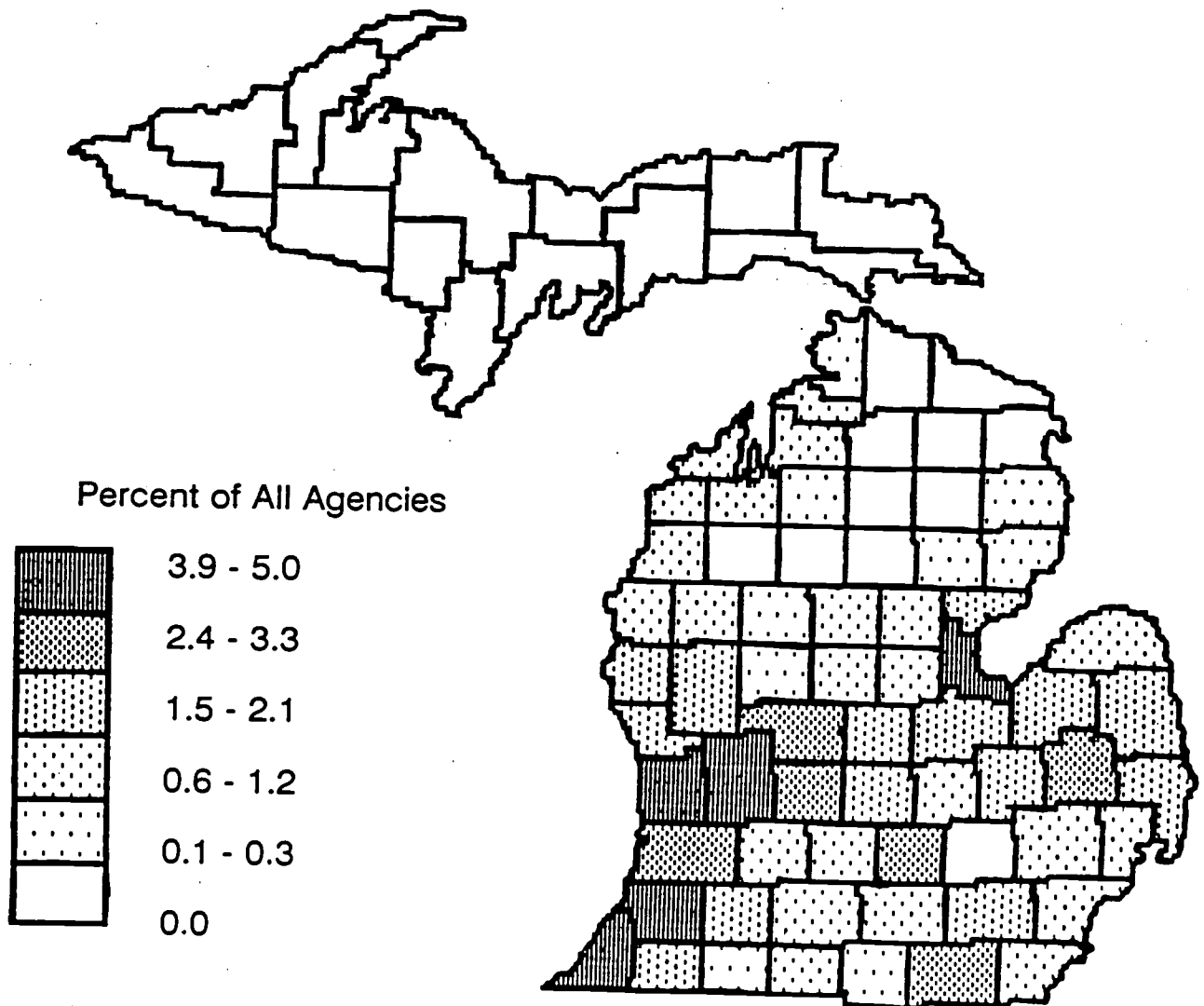
### **Regional Distribution of Services**

Table 6.3 shows that nearly sixty percent of the agencies providing services to migrant and seasonal farmworkers were located in the western portion of the state. Although this corresponds to the major areas of concentration of migratory farm labor, the southwestern part of Michigan is still underserved. Less than 20 percent of the service providers covered this area of the state, which contains 45 percent of the migrant population.

In the eastern portion of the state services are oversupplied when compared to the migrant population. Services are primarily concentrated in Mid-Michigan, reflecting the centralization of service providers, especially government agencies, near the state capitol. Also, these agencies were disproportionately concentrated in urban areas of these regions. These distributions are presented in Figure 6.1.

FIGURE 6.1

# Distribution of Agencies Serving Migrant Farmworkers



**Table 6.3**  
**Regional Distribution of Migrant Farm Workers and**  
**Service Providers**

<b>Region</b>	<b>Percent of All Migrants*</b>	<b>Percent of Service Providers**</b>
Northwest	7.2	20.8
Northeast	0.5	0.6
West Central	28.8	20.6
East Central	16.5	9.6
Mid Michigan	2.2	10.2
Thumb Area	2.6	10.5
Southwest	45.2	17.7
Southeast	3.3	7.5

\*N= 43,675

\*\*N= 156

Sources: *Estimated Migrant Population by County*, 1985 Shelter Environment Section, Michigan Department of Public Health; Migrant and Seasonal Farmworkers Survey, 1989.

### **Provider Perceptions of MSFW Problems**

Responding to the question "What do you think are the most serious problems facing migrant and seasonal agricultural workers in Michigan?" providers enumerated a wide range of problems that could be broadly classified into ten different areas. Their responses have been tabulated and are ranked in Table 6.4. The most frequently cited problems were in the areas of housing, health, education, employment, provision of services, and field conditions. We will briefly summarize their concerns in each of these areas.

**Table 6.4**

<b>Provider Perceptions of Migrant Problems</b>		
<b>Problems (Rank Order)</b>	<b>Number of Respondents (<i>n</i> = 84)</b>	<b>Percent of All Respondents</b>
1. Housing	46	61.3
2. Health	45	60.0
3. Education	32	42.7
4. Employment Conditions	29	38.7
5. Provision of Services	24	32.0
6. Field Conditions	21	28.0
7. Family Violence	8	10.7
7. Legal Difficulties	8	10.7
8. Language Barriers	7	9.3
9. Discrimination	5	6.7
10. Transiency	3	4.0

### **Housing**

Approximately 61 percent of the respondents identified housing as a serious problem. The most often cited housing problems included poor living conditions, unavailability of housing for migrants who arrive early, and generally the lack of sufficient migrant housing units. According to several respondents, poor living conditions are still prevalent despite camp licensing and regulations. Kitchen and sanitation facilities appear to be the most lacking although respondents generally referred to the migrant housing as "still bad but better than before."

Migrants who arrive before the camps are open provided another problem. As one provider remarked:

When the camps aren't open they have no place to stay. Everybody can get food and clothing but not everybody can get a place to sleep(045).

In addition to the difficulty of finding emergency shelter, the situation creates tension between migrants, growers and the community.

One-third of the respondents indicated that there was a need for more housing. Despite increases in the number of licensed migrant housing units in recent years, there is still a housing shortage in the state. As one respondent remarked,

There is work but no place to live. Further development of migrant housing in Michigan is hampered by high building costs and community resistance to the construction of new units(136).

### **Health Care**

Another serious problem falls in the area of health care. Sixty percent of the providers felt that migrants experienced serious difficulties, mainly in terms of the affordability and accessibility of preventative and primary health care. Lacking insurance and the money to pay for medical services, migrants often forego this care. This often results in poor health and undiagnosed illness.

However, money is not the only barrier to accessing health care. Additional barriers revolve around the location, hours of operation and staffing of medical facilities. Some medical services are not located in areas easily reached by migrants. Moreover, clinic hours of operation are generally not congruent with migrant's time off from work. The lack of bilingual health care providers further accentuates the problem of access. This is especially acute in the mental health and substance abuse areas where relatively few caregivers have bilingual/bicultural staff.

As a result, health problems in the migrant population are exacerbated. Several respondents commented on the lack of preventive care, poor nutrition, poor dental hygiene, limited knowledge about diseases and the preponderance of infectious diseases within the migrant population. Paraphrasing several providers:

Migrants are still faced with diseases like tuberculosis, diarrhea, hepatitis, and gastro intestinal disorders and lag several decades behind the general population in their prevention. They have an average life expectancy of under 50 years(076,081,117).

### **Education**

An additional area of concern deals with education. Approximately four out of every ten respondents felt that a major difficulty was the low level of educational attainment of migrants. Moreover, service providers underscored the need for more educational programs, especially for adults. It was felt that the schools were not equipped to deal with migrants and their problems. In addition, teachers often have low expectations about the academic performance of migrant children. Constant mobility disrupts the educational process and economic pressures force families to remove older children from school and put them to work in the fields. This results in a high dropout rate and continued illiteracy. As several providers succinctly state:

Migrant children have the highest dropout rate of any minority group. Furthermore, about one-half of the parents have not graduated from high school(031,041).

Another provider stresses the need to give migrant workers, especially the children, options for the future. Education is viewed as the means to provide those options.

### **Employment**

Nearly 40 percent of the respondents cited employment-related problems. Difficulties in this area were most evident in terms of hours worked and wages. Providers felt that migrants were often underemployed and underpaid. Several providers were especially concerned about the sharecropping type of employment which left migrants without wages until the crops were harvested and allowed for the "exploitation of the worker and his family." Migrant work was characterized by our respondents as, "long hours, hard work, dangerous and lacking benefits."

### **Provision of Services**

One-third of the respondents said that a major issue for migrants stemmed from difficulties in obtaining services. Several providers remarked that many of the existing social service programs were located in urban areas, making access difficult if not impossible. Also, agency hours of operation generally coincided with the migrant work day with few agencies providing evening or Saturday hours. Aggravating this situation is the lack of knowledge about services available for migrants as well as the unavailability of bilingual staff to work with migrants. Moreover, not all providers operate on an outreach basis.

### **Field Conditions**

One out of every four respondents identified the lack of field sanitation facilities or exposure to pesticides as two of the most serious problems facing migrants in Michigan. Although these problems overlap with concerns in the areas of health and housing, it seemed appropriate to examine this area separately. According to one provider: "One time a plane crop dusted over migrants who didn't get the word in time."(051) Open sores and other symptoms of pesticide poisoning plague migrants. Moreover, health problems within the migrant population are aggravated by poor field sanitation. The lack of adequate water, toilet, and handwashing facilities continues to exist on many Michigan farms.

### **Other Migrant Problems**

A number of our respondents indicated that migrants experience family difficulties, legal problems, or language barriers. Family violence--primarily wife beating and child abuse/neglect--was considered to be fairly widespread among migrant families. In addition, several respondents stated that migrant children often lack adequate adult supervision. While parents are in the field, children are being cared for by other children, thereby endangering their safety.

Migrant difficulties with the law stem from immigration and legal status issues as well as from delinquency. Legal dilemmas arising from the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986 (IRCA) have created a bureaucratic nightmare for migrants and service providers alike. Migrant experiences with the legal system in other areas tend to reflect unfamiliarity with Michigan laws although several providers mentioned problems with drunk driving offenders.

A number of providers reported that migrants were seriously hampered by language and cultural barriers which greatly limited their ability to obtain help for their problems as well as reducing their chances for greater social mobility. The following provider comments are illustrative of this:

They are out of sight. Migrants are not understood by service providers or community residents(023).

The lack of knowledge, especially English, marginalizes them and their rights(121).

In summary, housing, health, education, and employment are seen as the major problems migrant and seasonal farm workers face in Michigan. Difficulties in obtaining these basic needs are compounded by the unavailability or inaccessibility of service



providers. Further complicating this situation are language and cultural barriers which limit the options available to migrant farm laborers.

### **Difficulties in Providing Services to Migrant and Seasonal Agricultural Workers**

Respondents were also asked to identify problems that they encountered in servicing migrant and seasonal farm workers. As shown in Table 6.5, most of the difficulties revolve around the institutional setting or staffing concerns. The inaccessibility of services was the most frequently cited problem. Nearly one third of the respondents indicated that in some areas, services were either nonexistent or located in areas which were inaccessible to migrants. As one provider responded, "Rural areas are far from cities and migrants can't get into town." (013)

The lack of funding was another difficulty frequently cited by respondents. Approximately one quarter of the service providers said that their agencies did not receive sufficient funding to adequately serve their farmworker clients. Moreover, a number of the providers indicated that funding for programs had diminished at the same time demands for service increased.

**Table 6.5****Most Difficult Problems in Providing Services to  
Migrant and Seasonal Agricultural Workers**

<b>Rank Order of Problem</b>	<b>Agencies Indicating Problem</b>	
	<b>n=75</b>	<b>Percent of all Agencies</b>
1. Inaccessibility of Services	23	30.7
2. Funding	20	26.7
3. Language/Cultural Barriers	18	24.0
4. Lack of Staff	17	22.7
5. Insensitivity of Providers	12	16.0
6. Transiency of Migrants	11	14.7
7. Lack of Networking	9	12.0
8. Distrust of Anglo Workers	8	10.7
9. Community Resentment	6	8.0
10. Eligibility Criteria	5	6.7
11. Knowledge of Service Needs	4	5.3
12. Migrant Fears	4	5.3
Other	17	22.7

Nearly one-quarter of the respondents stated that their agencies also lacked adequate staff. Not only did they stress the need for more staff, they highlighted the need for bilingual, bicultural, or at least Spanish-speaking staff. One respondent recalled, "I don't speak Spanish. When someone comes in I have to call someone from another agency to do the interpreting."

Another complication that inhibits the delivery of services is the lack of networking among service providers. One out of every ten providers cited a lack of coordination between agencies and the duplication of services. Especially problematic was the lack of follow up of referrals.

Within the agency setting, additional difficulties arise from the lack of knowledge about migrants and insensitivity to their needs. Sixteen percent of the respondents said that many providers were insensitive or disinterested in farmworker problems. As one respondent commented, "There are social workers here who refuse to do outreach. This

perpetuates the marginality of special populations." (064) Moreover, several respondents felt that agency personnel were not always knowledgeable about the needs of migratory farm labor.

A small group of providers (seven percent) cited problems related to service eligibility criteria. These respondents felt hampered by agency guidelines which limit service to clients who meet specific requirements. Instead of serving "all clients in need," providers are limited to serving people who meet specific age, income, or residency criteria.

A final institutional level concern reflects community resentment of migrant farm workers. Slightly less than 10 percent of the respondents stated that community residents "had very little understanding of migrants" and did not want migrants in their community.

Some of the problems cited by providers reflected communication problems between migrant farmworkers and agency personnel. Approximately one-quarter of the respondents stated that there were language and cultural barriers which impeded service delivery. Eleven percent of the respondents specifically cited migrant distrust of white or Anglo workers. Further exacerbating the difficulties of service provision are what respondents called "migrant fears." A major obstacle revolved around the reluctance to press charges or file complaints against growers for fear of retaliation.

Finally, the transiency of migrants was cited by 15 percent of the respondents as a major barrier. Communication with farm workers is difficult and providing continual service becomes impossible. As several respondents expressed,

It's hard to stay in contact with a mobile population over a length of time.  
(067)

The transiency of the population makes it difficult to gauge demands for service. (073)

In summary, service providers encountered a number of obstacles to their efforts; the inaccessibility of services, the lack of funding and staff, and the fragmentation of the service delivery system. Staff and community insensitivity to migrant needs further complicate service delivery. Language and cultural differences combine with the high degree of mobility of this group to limit the effectiveness of service providers.

### Agency Responses to Service Delivery Problems

The respondents enumerated a number of agency measures which were developed to address the needs of migrant farm workers. Approximately 22 percent of the service providers stated that their agencies responded to the need for staffing and programs by hiring bilingual personnel and developing new programs. Fifteen percent indicated that their organizations were involved in expanding their service schedule by adding evening or Saturday hours. Nearly 12 percent expanded outreach to migrant farmworkers. Eight percent provided staff training, including language instruction, to improve services.

Agencies also responded to the problem of inaccessibility of services. Five percent stated that their agency helped coordinate service delivery in their area. Fifteen percent of the providers also were actively involved in establishing ties with other providers. Moreover, an additional 15 percent of the providers used linkages with other agencies to serve as a conduit of information.

**Table 6.6**  
**Agency Responses to Migrant Farmworker Problems**

Measure	Agencies Adopting Measure	
	<i>n</i> = 60	Percent of All Agencies
1. Bilingual Staffing	13	21.7
2. Develop New Programs	13	21.7
3. Advocacy	9	15.0
4. Expand Service Schedule	9	15.0
5. Networking With Other Agencies	9	15.0
6. Outreach	7	11.7
7. Staff Training	5	8.3
8. Coordinate Service Delivery	3	5.0
9. Community Involvement	2	3.3
Other Measures	9	15.0

A small number of providers firmly believed that their agencies should be strong advocates for migrant and seasonal farm workers. Furthermore, these efforts were aimed directly to involve local community residents in two of the agencies.

Thus, the agency response to migrant farm workers has targeted on increasing the number of bilingual staff, the development of new programs, and improving the networking between agencies in the state. A common reflection among our respondents was that their attempts to meet migrant needs were hampered by funding constraints.

### Summary

- Migrant farm worker needs can be attended to by a large number of service providers. Programs range from child care to job training, legal services and health care.
- 53 out of the 84 service providers we identified in Michigan, also provide services exclusively for migrant and seasonal farm workers. Education and health care are the permanent services of these agencies.
- The western region of lower Michigan has the majority of service providers working with the migrant farm workers, corresponding to the high proportion of worker clients in the area.
- The southwestern region, however, has the highest proportion of migrant workers and appears to be underserved according to the area location of service providers.
- Service agencies appear to be concentrated in urban areas.
- Service providers rank the major problems of migrants as being: (1) housing (2) health (3) education and (4) employment.
- Service providers ranked their most difficult problems in delivering support as: (1) accessibility (2) funding (3) language/cultural differences (4) shortage of staff and (5) insensitivity of providers to farm workers and their needs.
- Service providers responses to farm worker problems are focusing on: (1) developing new programs (2) networking with other agencies (3) more outreach to workers and (4) staff training.

## CHAPTER VII

### SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### Summary of Major Findings

The major findings of this study indicate that neither mechanization nor other structural changes in Michigan's agricultural economy have diminished this industry's dependence on seasonal and migrant agricultural labor. Furthermore, the estimated value of commodities produced and harvested by these workers constitutes a very significant portion of the \$15.5 billion generated annually by Michigan agriculture. In addition, the short term influx of migrant workers results in increased local spending, as well as the creation of employment opportunities for services workers in programs designed to provide supplementary sources of social supports for this needy population.

Estimating the migrant and seasonal farm worker population proved to be most difficult. Despite the fact that numerous public and private service agencies collect information on this population, most estimates can only be called "best guesses." In part this problem stems from the varying definitions of "seasonal" and "migrant" workers used by official enumerators and service providers. The current best estimate or guess concerning the size of the migrant farm labor force in Michigan is between 40,000 and 48,000 workers and their families. Nevertheless, the data collected for this research does permit us to characterize this population with some degree of confidence. First, the majority of these workers and their families continue to be of Mexican origin, either residents of Texas or Florida, or resident aliens (green carders) with permanent residence in Mexico. The number of Asian extraction workers is beginning to increase, although it is still a small fraction of the total labor force. Black workers in agriculture also constitute a small fraction of the total. As a rule, the migrant farm labor unit tends to be a family unit which, in most cases are considered to young families. Seasonal farm workers, on the other hand, tend to be single individuals or older adult couples.

The generally low wages which characterize agricultural work, estimated to have averaged \$4.35 per hour in 1987, has required the establishment of a reliable system of social supports in order to maintain the flow and supply of workers for Michigan's farm sector. This support system is composed of programs ranging from child care to job training, legal services and health care provided by a wide number of service providers. Furthermore, 53 out of the 84 service providers identified in this study, provided services exclusively for migrant and seasonal farm workers. The majority of which are located in the western region of lower Michigan. According to these service providers, the four major problems of migrant farm workers and their families, in order of importance, are housing, health, education, and employment. In addition, these agencies cited several problems

hindering their ability to deliver these needed services to the migrant population. Again, in order of importance, these hindrances were accessibility of services, lack of funding, language/cultural differences, shortages of staff and insensitivity of providers to farm workers and their needs.

Maintaining a reliable support system for migrant and seasonal farmworkers, as well as improving this system, is clearly a vital priority if the productivity of Michigan agriculture is to be maintained. This research revealed certain areas of concern and future action which we will now discuss.

Incorporated into this discussion is a series of recommendations that service providers and the authors view as important strategies that need to be undertaken within the state of Michigan in order to improve the quality of programs and services to migrant and seasonal agricultural workers.

### **Provider Recommendations**

Each respondent was asked to identify measures which would improve service delivery to migrant and seasonal farm workers. Their recommendations were tabulated and classified into five categories: staffing, program development and implementation, working conditions of migratory farm labor, development of public policy, and community awareness. Table 7.1 presents a summary of these recommendations.

**Table 7.1**  
**Provider Recommendations for Improving Service**  
**Delivery to Migrant and Seasonal Agricultural Workers**

<b>Recommendations</b>	<b>No. of Respondents</b>	<b>Percent of all Respondents <i>n</i> = 69</b>
Staffing		
Increasing Bilingual/ Bicultural Staff	10 6	4.5 8.7
Program Development/ Implementation	49	71.0
Funding targeted to migrant Programs	10	14.5
Training of Service Providers	6	8.7
Increased Networking	7	10.1
Migrant Involvement in Program Development	4	5.8
Increased Outreach	9	13.0
Expand Services/Programs	14	23.0
Improve Migrant Working Conditions	10	14.5
Legislative Advocacy	9	13.0
Community Awareness	4	5.8

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### **Staffing**

Approximately 15 percent of the respondents cited the need for more staffing. In particular, providers reported that additional bilingual/bicultural personnel were needed in their agencies in order to improve existing services to migrant and seasonal farm workers. They cited this need despite the fact that these agencies generally had one or more bilingual persons on the staff. Also, several respondents underscored the need for bilingual/bicultural personnel in the health professions, especially mental health.

### **Program Development and Implementation**

Seven out of every ten respondents identified measures relating to the development, implementation, and utilization of programs. One out of every five providers underscored the need to expand migrant programs, especially in the areas of education and health. The extension of these services not only refers to increasing the number of sites, but also reflects extending the duration of programs and increasing hours of operation. Thirteen percent of the respondents stressed the need for outreach into the migrant communities to provide services. Suggestions included increasing the number of staff in the field as well as developing mobil units. Moreover, several respondents cited the need to extend services to all clients in need, not just those who meet certain eligibility criteria.

Ten percent of the respondents highlighted the need to improve agency networking to facilitate and expedite services to migrants. Several mentioned the need for a comprehensive agency directory for service providers. One respondent suggested that such a directory be translated into Spanish for use by migrants. Also, a number of respondents identified a need for an umbrella agency to take the lead in a statewide coordination of both public and nonprofit services to the migratory farm labor population.

Nine percent of the service providers recommended that staff members receive additional training that would facilitate their work with migrants. Several respondents suggested that agencies should provide the time and funding incentives for language training. Others highlighted the need for staff to receive sensitivity training that was culturally based in order to better understand the migrant population and avoid negative stereotypes such as "migrants themselves are the problems..."; "migrant problems cannot be solved because they want to live that way..."; or "migrant people as a whole are willing to perpetuate their life-styles, so there isn't much that can be done."

An extremely insightful recommendation was made by a handful of service providers: migrants need to be involved in the development and implementation of programs. As one respondent expressed, "Migrants have to be a part of the solution to their problems."(041) Both providers and clients need to work together to identify needs, goals and priorities.

### **Working Conditions of Migratory Farm Labor**

One out of every seven respondents cited the specific measures aimed at improving the working conditions under which migrant and seasonal farm workers are employed. Specific recommendations include providing more sanitation facilities in the fields, controlling the use of pesticides; and more emphasis on field safety. Respondents underscored the need for monitoring compliance.

Suggestions regarding jobs and wages include raising the minimum wage for agricultural work; implementing collective bargaining agreements; restricting the use of children as field laborers; providing health benefits; and developing national information networks about employment opportunities. Included in these recommendations was the idea of establishing a toll free number (in English and Spanish) which would provide information about agricultural work. Also suggested was the establishment of a migrant rest and referral center at a key entry point in Michigan (i.e. Southwestern Michigan) to provide migrants with information about job availability as well as existing services.

### **Development of Public Policy**

Thirteen percent of the respondents underscored the need for agencies to help formulate policies regarding migrant and seasonal farm workers primarily through advocacy and lobbying. Agencies are viewed as political voices that can be raised to guarantee basic needs (i.e. housing, health care, employment, and schooling). Several respondents mentioned the need for regulating employment and wages as well as the flow of migrants.

Moreover, the federal government needs to re-evaluate immigration legislation. As one respondent remarked,

The amnesty provisions assumed that all SAW's were single people...now what do we do with the other family members who have an undefined status. They can't be deported but do not qualify for social services.(108)

An additional area of legislative concern reflects the problems related to local zoning ordinances and migrant housing. As one respondent remarked, "The farmer's hands are tied" (136). Community resistance to the development or rehabilitation of migrant housing has created substantial hurdles to improving the living conditions of migrants.

### **Community Awareness**

A final area of recommendations revolved around improving community awareness. A small group of service providers highlighted the need to educate the community about

the vital role migrants play in the state. As one respondent succinctly remarked, "People need to know the contribution that migrants make to the state since they pick most of the crops." (101) Negative stereotypes about migrant farmworkers tend to reinforce and perpetuate discriminatory behavior. More public awareness about the importance of migratory farm labor to Michigan agriculture and its overall economy is needed.

In addition, providers must work to break down these negative stereotypes. As is the case with other disenfranchised populations, community fears regarding the negative repercussions of migrants must be addressed. Community organizations need to constantly promote the understanding of migrant workers and their needs. As one provider suggests:

"We need to develop a rapport to break down barriers; break down racist attitudes that exist in rural areas." (022)

Agencies need to work with "a lot of uncomfortable people" in order to facilitate community acceptance of migrant workers and their families.

### **Recommendations of the Study Team**

This inquiry reports what is largely known: (1) migrant and seasonal farmworkers are important to Michigan's farm economy, (2) there are few studies and reports monitoring the status of migrant and seasonal farm workers in Michigan, (3) migrant and seasonal farmworkers continue to be a segment of the state's workers in need of improved housing, health, education and employment services and, (4) there is a relative proliferation of various services and agencies in the state which are responsible for meeting needs.

The greatest problem is the lack of consistent and updated information at the state level on the supply of and demand for migrant and seasonal farm workers. The states' employment agencies really do not know enough about the supply of workers entering Michigan on a seasonal basis. Moreover, the agricultural sector does not really know how many workers are needed annually for farm employment. Information on the supply of and demand for farm workers could assist the state in its annual plans for funding programs in the areas of housing, health, education and so on.

Michigan needs to more fully develop the network of service providers, to enhance their knowledge of existing services, and to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the service delivery system. With existing information technology, there should be relatively little difficulty in developing a communication system that links one service provider to others. The need for such a system is emerging, especially in the areas of employment

education and health services. Such a network would assist agencies in more efficiently providing services to this extremely mobile population.

We encourage the efforts of agencies to learn how to respond more effectively to migrant worker needs. Using techniques that are sensitive to the cultural norms and beliefs of their clients, service providers will foster greater trust among their clients. Here, Michigan State University can play an effective role by preparing useful references, training materials, courses and forums with a focus on farm workers. Also, Michigan State University can assist with the initiative to link the states' public policy makers with service providers in developing annual strategies and plans for the summer arrival of new farm worker groups.

Finally, the technical expertise of the university in the development of databases and data processing can be tapped for the creation of an integrated network of information that would facilitate the delivery of services to migrant farmworkers.

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**APPENDIX A.**  
**SURVEY INSTRUMENTS**

**A.1 Questionnaire**

**Page**  
**A-1**

## Appendix A.1.

### MIGRANT AND SEASONAL AGRICULTURAL WORKERS IN MICHIGAN QUESTIONNAIRE

Date and Time of Interview \_\_\_\_\_

#### Introduction

This is \_\_\_\_\_ (state name) calling from the Julian Samora Research Institute at Michigan State University. Your organization has been selected to participate in a survey of service providers regarding the needs of migrant and seasonal agricultural workers in Michigan. May we have a few minutes of your time to answer some questions about concerns that you have as a service provider. We would appreciate your cooperation and assistance in our efforts to assess the resources available to this population.

A copy of the findings of this project will be sent to all respondents.

#### I. Organization Information

Contact Person \_\_\_\_\_

Position at Organization \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Organization \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
City State Zip

Telephone \_\_\_\_\_ (\_\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_

Office  
Use Only

\_\_\_\_\_ 1-3 Respondent ID Number

A-1

## Description of Services

1a. What services does your organization provide for its clients ? (Please circle all that apply)

0 = does not provide    1 = does provide

- |          |  |
|----------|--|
| _____ 4  | 1. educational                               |
| _____ 5  | 2. day care                                  |
| _____ 6  | 3. health care                               |
| _____ 7  | 4. substance abuse counseling/rehabilitation |
| _____ 8  | 5. nutrition services                        |
| _____ 9  | 6. family counseling                         |
| _____ 10 | 7. individual counseling                     |
| _____ 11 | 8. job training                              |
| _____ 12 | 9. employment counseling                     |
| _____ 13 | 10. job placement                            |
| _____ 14 | 11. financial assistance                     |
| _____ 15 | 12. housing                                  |
| _____ 16 | 13. emergency assistance                     |
| _____ 17 | 14. information/referral                     |
| _____ 18 | 15. other service, please specify _____      |

\_\_\_\_\_ 19 1b. Does your organization provide direct services to clients ?

- 1. no, provides referrals
- 2. no, subcontracts with other agencies
- 3. yes
- 4. other, please specify \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ 20 2. Who is eligible for these services ?

- 1. all clients
- 2. migrant and seasonal agricultural workers only
- 3. other, please specify \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ 21 3a. Does your organization provide any services specifically for migrant and/or seasonal agricultural workers ?

- 0. No (skip to question # 5)
- 1. Yes (continue with question # 4)

\_\_\_\_\_ 22 3b. Do you receive funding for services provided exclusively for migrant and/or seasonal agricultural workers ?

- 0. no
- 1. yes

A-2

\_\_\_\_\_ 23 3c. What is the source of this funding ? (Please circle all that apply).

1. Federal government
2. State government
3. Local government
4. Foundations
5. Other, please specify \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ 24 3d. In the past five years, would you say that financial support to your organization for services to migrant and/or seasonal agricultural workers has

1. increased
2. decreased (circle one)
3. remained about the same

4. What services do you provide exclusively for migrant and/or seasonal agricultural workers ? (Please circle all that apply)

0 = does not provide                      1 = does provide

- |          |  |
|----------|--|
| _____ 25 | 1. educational                               |
| _____ 26 | 2. day care                                  |
| _____ 27 | 3. health care                               |
| _____ 28 | 4. substance abuse counseling/rehabilitation |
| _____ 29 | 5. nutrition services                        |
| _____ 30 | 6. family counseling                         |
| _____ 31 | 7. individual counseling                     |
| _____ 32 | 8. job training                              |
| _____ 33 | 9. employment counseling                     |
| _____ 34 | 10. job placement                            |
| _____ 35 | 11. financial assistance                     |
| _____ 36 | 12. housing                                  |
| _____ 37 | 13. emergency assistance                     |
| _____ 38 | 14. information/referral                     |
| _____ 39 | 15. other service, please specify _____      |

\_\_\_\_\_ 40-41 5a. How long has your agency been providing services to migrant and/or seasonal agricultural workers ?

(specify number of years) \_\_\_\_\_



- \_\_\_\_\_ 42      5b. Are your services to the migrant and/or seasonal agricultural workers seasonal or year round ?
1. seasonal
  2. year-round
  3. other, please specify \_\_\_\_\_

### III. Organization Definitions of Migrant and Seasonal Agricultural Workers

We are aware that there are many definitions of migrant and seasonal agricultural workers. We would like to know how your organization defines these populations.

6. Does your organization's definition of **MIGRANT** agricultural worker include any of the following ? Please respond yes or no to each item.

0 = no

1 = yes

- |             |   |
|-------------|---|
| _____ 43    | Agricultural work is principal employment   |
| _____ 44    | Performs agricultural work on seasonal basis  |
| _____ 45    | If not currently in migrant employment, must have performed migrant work within a specified time period |
| _____ 46-47 | If yes, work within _____ months  |
| _____ 48    | Establishes temporary residence for agricultural employment   |
|             | Permanent residence and temporary residence must be in:   |
| _____ 49    | different states  |
| _____ 50    | different counties  |
| _____ 51    | different school districts  |
| _____ 52    | Includes nonworking dependents traveling with worker  |
| _____ 53    | Other criteria, please specify _____  |

7. Does your definition of **SEASONAL** agricultural worker include any of the following ? Please respond **yes** or **no** to each item.

0 = no

1= yes

- |       |       |   |
|-------|-------|---|
| _____ | 54    | Agricultural work is principal employment   |
| _____ | 55    | Performs agricultural work on seasonal basis  |
| _____ | 56-57 | If <b>yes</b> , must work in agricultural less than _____ days per year   |
| _____ | 58    | If not currently in agricultural employment, must have performed agricultural work within a specified time period |
| _____ | 59-60 | If <b>yes</b> , must have worked within previous _____ months   |
| _____ | 61    | Resides in state where seasonal employment occurs   |
| _____ | 62    | Includes nonworking dependents  |
| _____ | 63    | Other criteria, please specify _____  |

#### **IV. Characteristics of the Migrant and Seasonal Agricultural Worker Population**

A critical element for evaluating existing services to the migrant agricultural worker population involves identifying the size and characteristics of this population. In this section, I will ask you several questions about your organization's exposure to these clients.

- |       |       |   |
|-------|-------|---|
| _____ | 64    | 8. Has your organization provided services to migrant workers this year ?     |
|       |       | 0. no (skip to question # 10)   |
|       |       | 1. yes (continue with question # 9)   |
| _____ | 65-68 | 9. To date, how many migrant workers has your organization served this year ? |
|       |       | (specify amount) _____  |
| _____ | 69-72 | 10. How many migrant workers did your organization serve in 1988 ?            |
|       |       | (specify amount) _____  |

- \_\_\_\_\_ 73-74 11. What method did your organization use to obtain these estimates of the migrant agricultural worker population ?
- 01. intake information
  - 02. actual count of clients
  - 03. survey of clients (please describe)
  - 04. other, please specify \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_ 75 12. During the past five years, has the number of migrant workers in your area:
- 1. increased
  - 2. decreased (circle one)
  - 3. stayed about the same

**Line 2**

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1-3 **Respondent ID Number**
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4 13. Has your organization provided services to seasonal agricultural workers this year ?
- 0. no (skip to question # 15)
  - 1. yes (continue with question # 14)
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5-8 14. How many seasonal agricultural workers has your organization served this year ?
- (specify amount) \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9-12 15. How many seasonal agricultural workers did your organization serve in 1988 ?
- (specify amount) \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_ 13-14 16. What method did your organization use to obtain these estimates of the seasonal agricultural worker population ?
- 01. intake information
  - 02. actual count of clients
  - 03. survey of clients (please describe)
  - 04. other, please specify \_\_\_\_\_

- \_\_\_\_\_ 15      17. During the past five years, has the number of  
seasonal agricultural workers in your area
1. increased  
2. decreased (circle one)  
3. stayed about the same
- \_\_\_\_\_ 16-17      18. What geographic areas do you serve ?  
(specify count(ies)) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
19. Could you briefly describe the migrant  
agricultural worker population that your  
organization serves ?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 18      Age composition \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ 19      Gender \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ 20      Citizenship \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ 21      Place of Residence \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ 22      Ethnic heritage \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ 23      Other, please specify \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
20. Could you briefly describe the seasonal  
agricultural worker population that your  
organization serves ?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 24      Age composition \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ 25      Gender \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ 26      Citizenship \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ 27      Place of Residence \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ 28      Ethnic Heritage \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ 29      Other, please specify \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_ 30-31      21. How long is the migrant season in your  
area ?  
(specify length in weeks) \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_ 32-33      22. In what month does it begin ?  
(specify month) \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_ 34-35      23. In what month does it end ?  
(specify month) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ 36-39 24. During the peak of the 1988 season, how many migrant agricultural workers were employed in your area ?

(specify amount) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ 40-43 25. During the peak of the 1988 season, how many seasonal agricultural workers were employed in your area ?

(specify amount) \_\_\_\_\_

#### V. Existing Data Archives on the Migrant and Seasonal Agricultural Worker Population

We would now like to ask you some questions about information that your organization collects on the migrant and/or seasonal agricultural workers that it serves.

\_\_\_\_\_ 44 26. Does your agency keep records of the number of migrant and seasonal agricultural workers that it serves ?

0. no (skip to question # 32)

1. yes (continue with question # 27)

\_\_\_\_\_ 45 27. How is this information collected ?

1. computerized management information system

2. intake worksheets

3. caseworker logs

4. other, please specify \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

28. Besides counting this population, what other information about your migrant and seasonal agricultural workers does your organization record ? (Please circle all that apply)

0 = no

1 = yes

_____	46	Age
_____	47	Gender
_____	48	Marital Status
_____	49	Place of Residence
_____	50	Educational Attainment
_____	51	Employment Status
_____	52	Occupation
_____	53	Job Training
_____	54	Citizenship
_____	55	Ethnic Heritage
_____	56	Health Status
_____	57	Disability Status
_____	58	Participation in public assistance programs
_____	59	Other, please specify _____

_____	60	29.	Is this information collected for
			1. individuals
			2. families (circle one)
			3. households

_____	61-62	30.	How many years has your organization collected information about the migrant and seasonal agricultural workers that it serves ?
			(specify number of years) _____

_____	62	31.	Is this information accessible for research purposes ?
			0. no Why not ? _____
			1. yes How do you request access ? _____
			_____
			_____

32. Has your organization conducted any surveys or special studies on the migrant and/or seasonal agricultural population that it serves ?

0. no (skip to question # 33)

1. yes (obtain complete citation for any materials)

# **VI. Perceptions of Service Needs of Migrant and Seasonal Agricultural Workers**

This final set of questions focus on your perceptions of the service needs of the migrant and seasonal agricultural workers in Michigan.

33. What do you think are the most serious problems facing migrant and seasonal agricultural workers in Michigan ?

34. What do you see as the most difficult problem(s) in servicing migrant and seasonal agricultural workers in your area ?







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